

SEDUCTION:

COMEDY.

AS IT IS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL IN DRURY-LANE.

BY

THOMAS HOLCROFT.

DUBLIN:

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MDCCCLXXVII.



P R E F A C E.

THE immortal Author of Hudibras affirms, the hardest task in the world is to write a play; it is, therefore, no wonder that writers of plays are prone to regard their labours with fondness, even to partiality; or that they should perceive with regret the light esteem in which a part of the literary world have lately affected to hold them. Works of rudiment, of disquisition, nay, even, of mere compilation, are often treated by criticism with a respect which a comedy, or tragedy, where wit, invention, genius, and all the highest faculties of the mind have, or ought to have, been employed, seldom meets. The theatre, however it may be debased by the nightly intrusion of unhappy and improper persons, has a most powerful and good influence on morals, which
 encreases

increases with industry, and as the means of gaining admission among the lower class increase. Much time is there spent to the best, the noblest, of purposes; the body's fatigues are forgotten, the mind is beguiled of its cares, the sad heart is made merry, fictitious sorrow obliterates real, and the soul, imbibing virtuous and heroic principles, is roused and impelled to actions that honour not only individuals but nations, and give a dignity to human nature. Those who can doubt this are to be pitied. And it is piteous, most piteous, that, not only the learned, but, the political world should treat the stage with neglect; nay, with contempt: that they do not combine, and employ the high powers they possess to the encouragement and perfection of an art which, being, in its own nature, so delightful, so fascinating, is capable of contributing, so infinitely, to the happiness, as well as to the pleasure, of mankind.

These ideas have long, and often, occurred to my mind, where they have acted with increasing force. If I have
written

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written a comedy which, perfectly moral in its tendency, and counteracting a fashionable vice that is in danger of becoming a vulgar one, has charms sufficient to attract spectators, I am of opinion I have done my country an essential service. That some who read this may call me vain or presumptuous is, to me, totally indifferent. The theatre is a subject of such consequence to virtue, happiness, and man, that I cannot forbear speaking of it with a sense of feeling which, I fear, I cannot impart.

I must now undertake a task of a very different and painful nature; the cause of my undertaking it shall be given, when I have told my story.

In the summer of 1785, I wrote the Opera of the Cholerick Fathers, and the Comedy of Seduction. They were both put into the hands of Mr. Harris, on certain conditions; the substance of which was, that if, after reading, he should approve the pieces, they were both to be played during the ensuing season, the first in November, and the latter in January or the beginning of

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February,

February, 1786. They were read by Mr. Harris, and both accepted, on these conditions; and so precise, so perfectly explained were they, that they were reduced to writing. However, certain objections arising on the part of Mr. Harris, concerning benefit nights (not the time of performing the pieces, for that remained determined) I myself tore the written agreement; saying, I thought it improbable men, who meant honestly and honourably, should differ in trifles; and that each other's word was sufficient.

When Mr. Harris had read Seduction, though he objected to parts, he was, yet, so well pleased with the whole, that he said, with evident and peculiar satisfaction, I had given the theatre a comedy which, he thought, would do it no harm.

Having made his objections, alterations were agreed on, and the comedy taken back. Further to prove how fully the word of Mr. Harris was engaged, how perfectly he understood himself pledged to abide by his agreement, while the Opera of the Cholerick Fathers

Fathers was preparing for representation, Mr. Harris sent to me, to make a new proposal, which, according to him, would highly benefit the theatre. This was, that instead of January, I should suffer the comedy to be brought out before Christmas, because he had a new pantomime (Omai) that would, in all probability, be greatly beneficial to the theatre, after Christmas; that his season would then be filled up, and, probably, exceedingly productive. That my interest might not suffer by this arrangement, he promised, in compensation, to suffer the new pantomime to be played for my third benefit, and, if the comedy ran a certain number of nights, for my fourth. When he made this proposition I desired time to consider, and consult my friends; and, at last, from a sincere wish to oblige Mr. Harris, and serve the theatre, acquiesced. This project, however, was deranged; not by me, or Mr. Harris; but by an event highly vexatious to both, and which I shall not relate now; perhaps never.

In the mean time, the play had received some alterations, and the insertion of a character so atrocious, yet so frequent, in this town, as to make, in the opinion of Mr. Harris, the representation of it dangerous. Accordingly, this was to be expunged, still further alterations were undertaken, and the comedy, a third time, delivered, as it is at present played, about the beginning of December, 1785. It will be necessary to remark, that before this the Choleric Fathers had been performed, and did not take that run which Mr. Harris expected, and I had hoped; and that, knowing the changeable disposition of Mr. Harris, I cautioned him against suffering this mediocrity of success to influence, and prejudice, his mind against the comedy. He assured me it should not.

I must likewise state, that so self-denying was I, and desirous of promoting the welfare of the theatre, when Mr. Harris informed me, by Mr. Lewis, he had no further hopes from the Opera, which had then been played seven nights, and that he would allow me
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the eighth instead of the ninth night, but adding he doubted whether I should clear expences; I, though there was no probability of loss, and, certainly, some of gain; gave up my third night to the theatre, telling Mr. Lewis I would not deprive Mr. Harris of a night under such circumstances.

The comedy remained with Mr. Harris, who, I was told, was gone out of town, till the beginning of January, without my receiving any information of its being preparing for rehearsal. I began to be alarmed; and, unable to obtain an interview, or even discover where Mr. Harris was, I wrote a letter to him, expressive of these alarms. I need not describe what my feelings were, a few days after, on receiving the comedy back, with a letter from Mr. Harris, in which these feelings were indeed little respected, informing me that it could not succeed. The manner of sending it back was, almost, as extraordinary as the act. It was brought, loosely tied up with pack-thread, in a bit of dirty brown paper, unsealed, by the servant of Mr. O'Keefe.

I mean not to insinuate any possible disadvantage to the character of Mr. O'Keefe: far to the contrary. I have often heard him honourably mentioned. Neither can I say how it came into his hands, or that he knew what it was; but this is no palliation of Mr. Harris's conduct. I returned no answer; it would have been exceedingly wrong to have trusted the irritated mind at such a moment.

I will now give my reasons for relating this transaction to the world. To pretend I did not feel all the indignation which conduct like this must kindle, would be to assume an apathy contrary to nature; and, even, to virtue. This, however, has worn off: I act coolly, at present, and from a sense of duty, not revenge. As far as relates to myself, I would wish the affair might never more be remembered; but, if men in similar situations might act thus *always* with impunity, as they *too often* do, what means could the weak and unprotected find of obtaining redress; what security in their dealings with a man, who, regardless of probity, and
yielding

yielding to the caprice of opinion, the dictates of pride, or the narrow motives of self-interest, does not scruple to break his word, so pledged, and engagements thus formal?

This narrative will scarcely be more disagreeable to Mr. Harris to read than it has been to me to write: it is not my own cause I plead, for that was gained in the success of my comedy; but the cause of the weak against the strong; the cause of hereafter genius against hereafter injustice; the cause of the man, who, endowed with gifts of which Nature herself is proud, but deprived of every benefit of Fortune, shall devote his days and nights to study, and suffer every abstinence with resignation, and even with delight, cheered by the sweet hope of being some time known for what he is. There is a momentary intoxication, a delirium of soul, in this hope, which not the daily privation of pleasures, the disappointment of years, the labours of a life, nor injustice itself can counterbalance. It is this godlike sensation which has given the mind an impetus, and made it produce works so various,

various, and so vast, that, glancing at their amplitude and sublimity, it stands confounded at its own powers!

That I may avoid all appearance of mingling flattery with an appeal to justice, I shall forbear describing the conduct of the Proprietors of Drury-Lane; except saying, they have behaved to me like Gentlemen, and men of honour.

My heart will not, however, suffer me to be equally reserved, and silent, concerning Mr. King. The moment he was convinced the producing of this comedy would probably serve, not injure, the theatre, his zeal and activity, in my cause, were indefatigable: how very essentially his powers, as an actor, have contributed to its success is too public for me (had I a wish so selfish) to conceal. But this is not the first debt of gratitude from me to Mr. King; his friendship, or his philanthropy, while I was struggling into notice, and combating with adverse fortune did me a generous kindness which never can, nor ever ought to be forgotten.

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The Town have beheld, with delight and surprise, the increasing excellence of Miss Farren; and, thinking she had attained perfection, have been astonished, when they saw her next, at their own mistake. In the present instance, her exertions, and even the very manner of them, have been as pleasing to me, as they were beneficial to the comedy. I can only add, she has excelled herself; and, though that thought be old, it never was more properly applied.

Having mentioned these, it were injustice to the rest of the performers not to thank them; both for the display of talents, the merits of which are well known, and the ardour, I may say the anxiety, they testified for my success. Yes, I most sincerely thank them all; and only forbear to name them, individually, because I cannot find expressions, various and warm enough, to convey my thoughts, without making true and well deserved praise assume the form of laboured panegyric.

Upper Mary-le-bone Street,
March, 1787.

P R O-

PROLOGUE.

Spoken by Mr. BARRYMORE.

AMONG the tawny sons of Indian lands,
The Hero, who aspires to lead their bands,
Must proof afford, ere he his cause can gain,
Of resolution, and contempt of pain :
Ere they'll confess him fit for them to die,
Whips, stings, and fire, his fortitude must try !
Assembled Chiefs the desp'rate contest view,
Inflict the torture, and the pang renew !
And, should he, while the flames his reins embrace,
Heave one poor sigh, or even breathe apace,
With scorn and ignominy, he's expell'd,
By boys and women in derision held !
But if to pain superior, he comes forth
Equal to heroes of acknowledg'd worth,
Applauding shouts re-echo to the skies,
And all hearts claim him as his country's prize !
Severe the task ! — Who would to fame aspire
In lands like these, where Virtue's try'd by fire ?
Scarce less severe his task who pants for fame,
Scorch'd by the ardour of Poetic flame ;
While fable, diction, pathos, wit and taste,
Like scorpion whips, and racks, are round him plac'd :
For, while to conquer each defect he tries,
“ On the strong torture of the mind he lies ! ”
Rashly resolv'd to dare impending fate,
To-night comes forth a hardy candidate.
The Critic lash, the more than mortal stings,
When Obloquy the Poet's bosom wrings,
When Disappointment gnaws his bleeding heart,
And mad Repentment hurls her venom'd dart,
When angry Noise, Disgust, and Uproar rude,
Damnation urge, and ev'ry hope exclude,
These, dreadful tho' they are, can't quite repel
Th' aspiring mind, that bids the man excel.

Tho'

P R O L O G U E.

Tho' rules, alone, would yield a barren fame,
Such praise as rules can merit he may claim.
Each unity's preserv'd, nor knows the play
A lapse of time beyond the close of day;
No change of scene denotes a chang'd abode,
Nor has he dar'd indulge one episode.
But rules of art no native tints bestow;
Art never taught the beauteous rose to blow:
If nurtur'd not by dews, and heav'n-born fire,
The half-blown bud must droop, the plant expire.

D R A.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Sir Frederick Fashion,
Lord Morden,
General Burland,
Lapelle,
Bailiff,
Mr. Wilmot,

Mr. PALMER.
Mr. KEMBLE.
Mr. AICKIN.
Mr. BATES.
Mr. CHAPLIN.
Mr. KING.

Lady Morden,
Harriet,
Emily,
Mrs. Pinup,
Mrs. Modely,

Miss FARREN.
Mrs. WILSON.
Mrs. BRERETON.
Miss TIDSWELL.
Miss POPE.

The time within twelve hours. The scene is the house of Lord Morden, and does not change; and the stage is never vacant, but at the end of an act. The action is single.

S E D U C T I O N:

A

C O M E D Y.

A C T I.

SCENE I.

[*A superb Drawing-room in the House of Lord MORDEN, with several Doors leading to other Apartments.*]

LAPELLE, *from Lord Morden's dressing-room, looking at his watch.*

TWENTY minutes past ten!—a shameful time of the morning for a gentleman's gentleman to be disturbed.—My Lord has lost his Money, can't sleep himself, and won't suffer others to take their natural rest.

SCENE II. LAPELLE, Mrs. PINUP *from Lady Morden's dressing-room.*

Mrs. Pinup. I declare upon my honour, this is a most monstrous time of night for a lady's gentlewoman to be kept up; dozing over a dull novel, or nodding in an antichamber and an arm chair, while others are taking their pleasure, and losing their estates, among their friends.

Lapelle. Good morrow, Mrs. Pinup.

Mrs. Pinup. Good morrow, Mr. Lapelle! Good night, you mean.—I have not been in bed yet!

B

Lapelle!

Lapelle. No!

Mrs. Pinup. That vile bedside bell!—They'll wear me baggard before I am old! Knew I should not rest long, so threw myself down in my clothes; and, just as I was got into a sound sleep, tingle, tingle, tingle; up I must get, to dress my Lady, who, for my part, I believe never sleeps at all.

Lapelle. Why, yes; your fashionable folks are a kind of ghosts, that walk of nights, and greatly trouble the repose of valers and lady's maids—and late hours, like white paint, are excellent promoters of crack'd complexions.

Mrs. Pinup. I declare, upon my honour, I am as tired as—as——

Lapelle. A hackney coach-horse, on a rainy Sunday.

Mrs. Pinup. Yes—and as drowsy as——

Lapelle. An alderman at an oratorio—Your Lady had a deal of company at her rout—Was Sir Frederick Fashion there?

Mrs. Pinup. To be sure.

Lapelle. He is a prodigious favourite with your Lady, I think.

Mrs. Pinup. Favourite!—There are strange doings in this world!—Staid I know not how long, after every body else was gone!

Lapelle. What, alone, with your Lady?

Mrs. Pinup. Alone, with my Lady!

Lapelle. Indeed!—Was Mrs. Modely at the rout?

Mrs. Pinup. Yes—but don't ask me any questions; 'tis impossible I should say ten words more: I am talking in my sleep now.—When I get up, in the morning, that is, about three o'clock in the afternoon, I'll tell you all; so good night.

SCENE III.

Lapelle. A wonderful change in a short time!—Lady Morden, young, hardtome, and full of spirits, was, not a month ago, reserved in her conduct, fond of her husband, contented with home, and, indeed, a miraculous kind of exception among wives of quality.

lity. Whereas, now, she has suddenly turned fantastical in dress, capricious in temper, free of speech, and, what we half-bred folks should call, light of carriage. She games with the women, coquettes with the men, and seems in every respect, ambitious to become—a woman of fashion. As for my Lord—why—he is a man of fashion.

SCENE IV. GENERAL BURLAND, LAPELLE.

Gen. Is your Lady up, Mr. Lapelle?

Lapelle. Yes, Sir—I believe she has never been in bed.

Gen. Who—what do you mean?

Lapelle. My Lady had a rout last night.

Gen. A rout—and never in bed? Impossible!

Lapelle. Yes! but 'tis very true, Sir.

Gen. Lady Morden! She whom, but a few weeks since, I left so singular, so eminent an example of simplicity, and purity of manners!

Lapelle. Sir Frederick Fashion was here.

Gen. Sir Frederick Fashion!

Lapelle. He staid after every body else had retired.

Gen. What! alone, with Lady Morden?

Lapelle. So her Ladyship's woman, who is scarcely yet undressed, informed me.

Gen. [*after a pause of astonishment*] Why, then, all hopes of goodness, in this world, are vanished! —Go—bid my daughter, my Emily, come to me.

Lapelle. She is not stirring, I fancy, Sir.

Gen. But I fancy she is, Sir; I am sure she is.—What, Sir, she had not a rout, to keep her up all night!

Lapelle. She was of my Lady's party, I believe, Sir.

Gen. [*after a pause of great anxiety*] Go—go—pray, go, and do as I bid you.

SCENE V.

Gen. What will this town, this world, come to! The only perfectly amiable, the only enchantingly virtuous woman I knew, fascinated at last, and sinking

into the gulph of depravity!—She will drag down my Emily too!—No! I'll hide her in a forest, seclude her in a cave, rather than suffer her to be infected by the pestiferous breath of this contagious town.—But is she not already tainted?—Of my Lady's party!—She that I left her with as a pattern, commanded her to observe, to study, to imitate in all things!

SCENE VI. GENERAL BURLAND, LAPELLE.

Gen. Well, where is my daughter?

Lapelle. I have called her woman, and she will call Miss Emily.

Gen. I'll call her myself—and it shall be the most ungentle call she has long heard from me.

SCENE VII. LAPELLE, HARRIET, *in the dress of a Croat.*

Lapelle. Who comes here? Some foreign sharper, I dare say—One of my Lord's morning duns for last night's debts.

Har. [*with the brague*] Hark you, young man; may I be asking you where I will find my Lord Morden?

Lapelle. He is not come down, Sir.

Har. Oh, that, I suppose, is because he is not up.

Lapelle. My Lord told me he expected a gentleman, or two, would call—but he has had so many calls lately—

Har. That he is a little slow in answering?

Lapelle. Rather—Riches, regularity, and roast beef, will soon, I fear, take their leave of our house.

Har. Faidth, and that may vry will be; for they are all three become great vagabonds. Riches is turned American pedlar, Regularity a Prussian grenadier, and as for Roast Beef, why the Frinch are now so fond of good ould English fashions, that poor Roast Beef is transported alive to Paris.

Lapelle. My Lord, I believe, is a little out of cash, at present.

Har.

Har. Will, now, that is viry prudent of him to put it out : for, whin a man finds he can't keep his cash himself, he is viry right to lit odther people keep it for him.

Lapelle. Nay, then, I don't know a more careful gentleman.

Har. Careful ? Why, sure, always whin a man of spirit begins to take care of his money, 'tis becase he has none.

Lapelle. Well, Sir, if you will please to leave your card, his Lordship, I suppose, will know who has called.

Her. Indeed and he won't.

Lapelle. How so, pray, Sir ?

Har. Faidth, for a viry good raison—He niver saw me in his life.

Lapelle. Who then shall I say ?—

Har. And is it my name you would know ?

Lapelle. If you please.

Har. Let me see—What the white dyle is my name now ?—Oh !—Char-les Phelim O'Fireaway ; an Irishman by accident, a gentleman by policy, and a captain of Croats, in the Austrian sarvis, by design. Do you understand that riddle now ?

Lapelle. Not clearly.

Har. I did not intind you should—What time can I see my Lord ?

Lapelle. Most likely, about one.

Har. Will, then, give him this litter, and inform his Lordship, I will take the liberty of calling, this afternoon, to bid him a good-morrow.

SCENE VIII. LAPELLE, LORD MORDEN.

Lord M. [*in his morning gown and slippers, and calling as he enters*] *Lapelle !*

Lapelle. So ! here he comes, already. [*answering*] My Lord.

Lord M. What time is it ?

Lapelle. Eleven o'clock, my Lord.

Lord M. What a damn'd night have I passed !—Is my coffee ready ?

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Lapelle. I'll go and see, my Lord.

SCENE IX. LORD MORDEN.

[*Throws himself on the sofa*] This head-ache!—No rest!—Oh for half an hour's sleep!—A cursed silly course of life, mine!—But there is no accounting in the morning for the conduct of over-night.

SCENE X. LORD MORDEN, LAPELLE *with coffee.*

Lord M. This is not half strong enough—get me some as strong as possible.—Any message? [*risés*].

Lapelle. This letter, my Lord.

SCENE XI. LORD MORDEN.

From Lady Westbrook, I see. [*reads.*]—"Um—
" A young lady in disguise!—um—Will relate her
" own story!—um—um—Rely on your honour to
" keep her secret, and serve her cause!—Would have
" addressed my self to Lady Morden, but for reasons
" which you shall know hereafter!"

SCENE XII. LORD MORDEN, LAPELLE, *with more coffee.*

Lord M. Who brought this letter?

Lapelle. An Irish gentleman, in a foreign dress.

Lord M. A gentleman?

Lapelle. Said he would call about one, my Lord.

Lord M. Shew him ~~into~~ my room, and inform me the instant he comes.

Lapelle. General Burland is here.

Lord M. [*aside*] General Burland! Zounds!

Lapelle. Came to town late last night, my Lord.

Lord M. Tell him I am come down.

SCENE XIII. LORD MORDEN.

Must not let him see the present temper of my mind—My guardian once, he is determined never to think me of age—I need not his reproof to increase my present

sent chagrin ; my own follies, and Lady Morden's unexpected, unaccountable reverse of conduct, are sufficient—He will lay it all to me ; and, perhaps, with reason !—Here he comes—Really, one of these very prudent, plain-spoken friends is a very disagreeable person, in these our moments of folly.—Well, I must assume a cheerfulness I don't feel, and ward off his wisdom with raillery.

SCENE XIV. LORD MORDEN, GENERAL BURLAND.

Gen. Good morrow, my Lord.

Lord M. General, good morrow.

Gen. You seem scarcely awake.

Lord M. [*Stretching.*] Slept ill—troubled with the night-mare.

Gen. Your troubles, I am afraid, are rapidly increasing.

Lord M. How so, General ?

Gen. Lady Morden had a rout, last night !

Lord M. Oh ! and forgot to send you a card, I suppose.—Is that my fault ?

Gen. You are merry, my Lord ; but he who drinks poison, out of a frolic, will soon be glad to send for a physician, out of fear ; and the chances are the doctor will come too late.

Lord M. Trope and figure !

Gen. My Lord ! my Lord ! this levity is unseasonable: blushes, and shame, would better become you.

Lord M. Pff ! They are out of fashion.

Gen. Yes, you leave your friends to blush for your faults.

Lord M. My friends are very good ; nay, indeed, generous ; for, were they but to spare a single blush for each of their own faults, they would have none to bestow on mine.

Gen. Fie ! The mirth of a mad-man is sport only to boys—I was your guardian, I wished to prove myself your friend. 'Twas I first discovered that, then, angelic woman who is, now, Lady Morden ; I was the cause

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cause of her union with you ; and I am, therefore, accountable to myself, to her, and to society, for her conduct.

Lord M. That is, you are a kind of second-hand sponsor—Godfather-in-law, as it were.

Gen. Very well, Sir ! proceed ! despise reproof ! ridicule advice !

Lord M. Nay, good doctor, you really wrong me ; 'tis not the advice, but the physic, I hate—At least, I hate the form under which it is administered—But, pray, tell me ; when last you saw Lady Morden, did you perceive any symptoms of that degeneracy, in her Ladyship, you, now, complain so loudly of ?

Gen. None ! I thought it impossible !

Lord M. And is it not rather extraordinary, then, that my example should, so suddenly, subdue what, within this month, seemed so invulnerable ?

Gen. [*great surprize and energy*] It is extraordinary, my Lord ! most extraordinary ! but not less true ; and, had you any sense of your duty to yourself, your family, or society, the truth of it would make you tremble !

Lord M. See how differently different people understand things ! My acquaintance are, every day, wishing me joy of her Ladyship's reformation ; and telling me how surprisngly she has retrieved her character, in the world.

Gen. [*sarcastically*] And Sir Frederick Fashion, no doubt, among the rest !

Lord M. [*endeavouring to conceal his feelings*] Hem !—yes—yes. He is one of our very first men, you know ; and he is quite in raptures with her—swears she was born to lead and outshine us all.

Gen. [*with continued irony*] The approbation of so great an adept must give you vast pleasure !

Lord M. Hem !—a—infinite !—Not but this sudden change has, rather, surpris'd me.

Gen. How so ?

Lord M. Just as you left town, her Ladyship's melancholy seemed increasing—wandering over the house,
like

like a perturbed spirit, as the play says, mournfully clanking her chains, and frightening the gentle smiles and pleasures from her, she seemed to way-lay me, and, with moving look, and melting eye, interest compassion; till, egad, I, really, at last, began to pity her.

Gen. You did!

Lord M. Yes—But, suddenly forsaking the—*pensero*, she broke in upon me, one morning, and, with an air of levity and good humour, and a small tincture of reproach, then, and there, read me a very pretty, wifelike, remonstrance.

Gen. To which you listened with a truly picktooth insensibility.

Lord M. Yes—You know my way.

Gen. And what was the subject of her discourse?

Lord M. Why, chapter the first was a recapitulation of my agreeable follies, and her own perverse virtues.—She was no partaker in my pleasures—I had forgot every endearment—She was left to dine, sup, and sleep, by herself—I dined, supped, and slept, nobody knew where.—She more recluse than the abbess of a convent: I more uncertain than the price of stocks, or the place of prime minister.

Gen. [*with earnest concern*] And what did you say to this?

Lord M. [*aside*] I must face it out. [*aloud*] Say? What could I say to such a simple woman?

Gen. You did not attempt to deny the charge, then?

Lord M. What should I deny? 'Twas every syllable true; and every syllable in my praise.

Gen. [*sighs*] Humph!—Then you do not think, the sweets of affection ought, sometimes, to alleviate the bitterness of neglect.

Lord M. Sweets! pshaw! they are too cloying to the stomach, and ought to be taken sparingly.—I am fond of sweet music, but too much of it sets me to sleep.—Besides, a wife, like a barrel organ, can only play one set of tunes.

Gen. [*sighs*] Well, Sir, but the conclusion?

Lord

Lord M. A very unexpected one, I assure you—— I misunderstood this for a declaration of war; and, with a smile, was very obligingly about to intreat her Ladyship would hatch her melancholy into mischief her own way: when, turning short upon me she curt-fied, seemed abashed, began to apologize, applaud my conduct, ridicule the silliness of her own, and promised to become as fashionable a Lady as I, or any Lord in Christendom, could wish.

Gen. Your increase of happiness is, then, prodigious?

Lord M. Hem!—a—unspeakable.—Lady Morden, I own, was, certainly, a kind of——Demi-Angel, tho' my wife——but, then, her—her goodness seemed to throw one at such a distance—so much in the back ground that there was only one figure noticed in the picture!

Gen. 'Tis well, Sir, you are so perfectly satisfied.

Lord M. Nay, General, I will own, I have often felt a kind of inclination, a sort of wish, as it were, to become very prudent, and wise, and—and all that—but, really, one has so much to do that one does not know where to begin.—Besides, you very good kind of people, you—upon my honour, you are, in many respects, the most queer, precise, particular, species of beings, and have such strange notions!—Instead of taking one's pleasure, and doing just what one like's best, which, you know, is so natural, one must live for the good of one's country, love one's wife and children, pay tradesmen, look over accounts, reward merit, and a thousand other of the—the most ridiculous whims—and what nobody, absolutely, nobody does.

Gen. Intolerable profligacy!—I have listened to you, my Lord, with grief, vexation, astonishment, and pity!—Your mind is degraded; and the more dangerously so because you believe your worst vices to be your greatest merits! You have had honour, happiness, and pleasure, of the most perfect kind, within your power; and you have rejected them, to clasp
their

their shadows ! To merit pity by misconduct is humiliating ; but, by misconduct to incur contempt is, to a manly spirit, insupportable ; and the latter will, I fear, be suddenly your Lordship's fate. Did not the remembrance of your noble father affect me, I should look upon your approaching punishment with apathy ; because you wilfully have plunged to perdition : but, for your Lady, if I cannot save her, I shall mourn indeed !

S C E N E X V.

Lord M. Faith, this good general is, like a cuckoo, always in a tune. [*sings*] He has reason !—I have laboured to laugh at my own follies ; but the farce is over, the forced jest forgotten, and the forcerefs Recollection conjures up the ugly phantom Disgust !—Why, what a child am I !—Oh ! Lady Morden—pshaw !—absurd !—I will not make myself the butt, and by-word, of my acquaintance—I—I—I will laugh—ha, ha, ha !—laugh at my Lady's gallantries.—I jealous !—I !—that have daily made jealousy a standing jest ; the criterion of an ill-bred, vulgar, mind !—No, no, no. [*Sees Lady Morden, and Sir Frederick Fashion, coming ; and is seized with a suspicious anxiety, which he endeavours to conceal.*]

S C E N E X V I. LORD MORDEN, LADY MORDEN in an undress, SIR FREDERICK FASHION.

Lady M. [*entering*] No, no, Sir Frederick ; you are partial.

Sir F. Not in the least, Madam.

Lady M. Yes, you are,—good morrow to your Lordship—yes, you are.—I feel, I still retain a leaven of former silly prejudices ; but a little collision, among you people of superior fashion, will soon wear these asperities smooth, and bring them to bear a proper polish.

Sir F. Ah ! Madam, you have a leaven of something celestial ; which we inferior people wonder at, but cannot imitate !

Lord

S E D U C T I O N :

Lord M. [*aside*] So!

Lady M. [*sees Sir Frederick with her fan*] Fiest flatterer!—but you are always saying civil things; and that, I fancy, makes you so agreeable.

Sir F. [*serious and ardent*] No, Lady Morden; you wrong me—my tongue is forced to give utterance to the effusions of my heart—By heaven, you are an angel!—You must not be angry with me, for I cannot help it.

Lady M. No, no—angry! no—Tho', I really believe, I do improve—don't I, my Lord?

Lord M. Certainly, Madam, certainly!

Lady M. Yes—I have discovered that one of my most capital errors, formerly, was being too sensible of my own defects. I find that to wear, on one's countenance, an open, and avowed, consciousness that one possesses every grace and perfection, is the grand secret of really possessing them: or, at least, of persuading the world one really does, which is the same thing.

Sir F. Your Ladyship is very right; nothing can put a face of real fashion out of countenance: the placid features are all fixed.

Lady M. Oh, immoveable!—Like the owner's names, cut in brass and nailed to their doors.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! Charming!

Lady M. Do but observe one of our well-bred beaux, at a public assembly, and you will see him enter, plant himself in a spot, elevate his eye-brows, fix his eyes, half-open his mouth, and stand like an automaton, with its head turning on a pivot. [*mimicks the manner.*]

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! Charming! Charming!

Lord M. [*smiling.*] But, don't you think this a little tending to the ridiculous, Madam?

Lady M. Oh dear, no!—Nothing can be ridiculous that's fashionable.

Sir F. Oh, no, impossible!

Lady M. Formerly, I should have blushed if stared at: but, now, I find, the only way is to stare again—without looking—that is, without betraying the least indication

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indication of knowing whether one is looking towards the man, or the wall—thus.

Lord M. [*with forced pleasantry*] Ha, ha, ha! your Ladyship is very right: modesty—modesty is an obsolete bugbear.

Lady M. Yes, and, like the—the ghost in the tragedy, has been stared out of doors.

Sir F. Oh, the very quakers despise it, at present.

Lady M. Yes—'tis a shabby fellow, whose acquaintance every body wishes to drop.—To be sure I was a most absurd creature: was not I, my Lord?

Lord M. I—upon my honour, Madam—I—you—no—no—not absurd—no.

Lady M. Oh fie—not absurd—why, do you know, Sir Frederick—ha, ha, ha!—I—ha, ha, ha! I was, downright, in love with his Lordship.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! in love with his Lordship?

Lady M. Ha, ha, ha! upon my honour, 'tis true!—is it not, my Lord?

Lord M. Ha, ha, ha!—ye—ye—yes—Madam, yes.

Lady M. Thought him the most charming man in—in the whole world!

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! Is that possible?

Lady M. Why, it—it is scarcely credible!—But—but such is the fact—Nay! I doated on him—and continually reproached myself, for wanting power, and attractions, to obtain my Lord's affection!—For I never blamed him—Ha, ha, ha!—I—ha, ha, ha!—I used to sit whole nights, while my Lord was out, watching and weeping; and whole days studying which way I could regain his love!

Sir F. *Regain,* Lady Morden!—Why, was his Lordship ever so unfashionable as—as—?

Lady M. As to love his wife—Why, yes, really—I—I do believe he was so singular, for—for a whole fortnight.

Sir F. Why! ha, ha, ha! Why, were you, Lord Morden?

Lord M. [*forcing a laugh*] Ha, ha, ha!—I—I [*with a little spleen*] I don't know, Sir, what I was.

Lady M. Nay, don't be out of countenance, my Lord! You hear, I have the justice to relate my own foibles, as well as your Lordship's—and mine—mine were infinitely the greatest.—It is exceedingly strange, but, so—fascinated—was I, that, ha, ha, ha! I—Ha, ha, ha! [*suddenly becoming very serious*].—I am verily persuaded, I could have died, with pleasure, to have insured his affection.

Lord M. Ha, ha, ha!—[*aside, and turning away*] I cannot bear it.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! These things are unaccountable.

Lady M. [*resuming her levity*]. Ay, one wonders how one could be so weak!—Oh, Sir Frederick! I am going to Christie's. There is a *Painting* I have a mind to purchase. They tell me 'tis very fine.

Sir F. What is the story, Madam?

Lady M. The *Metamorphosis of Acton*.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! A fashionable subject.

Lady M. Yes—that—tha—that is the very reason I wish to have it.—Poor Acton is taken at the precise moment when the—the change is taking place.

Sir F. In his forehead?

Lady M. Yes, I am going down there now; will you go with me, Sir Frederick?

Sir F. With pleasure, Madam—Ha, ha, ha! poor Acton!

Lady M. Ay, poor Acton!—Adieu, my Lord.

SCENE XVII.

Lord M. Madam! [*following, stops short*]. 'Eddeath! what am I about? Shall I, at last, sink into one of the vulgar; and become jealous?—Wretched about a—oh, no! Acton! [*striking his forehead*]. Sure all men are idiots, and never know the value of that inestimable jewel, a lovely and a loyal wife, till in danger of having it purloined. [*Lord Morden retires into his dressing-room*].

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

A C T.

A C T II

SCENE I. LAPELLE (*coming from the door of the antichamber, as if he had been listening*).

SO, Mr. Irishman, by accident! A lady, in disguise! That's the riddle, is it?—But, hush!

SCENE II. LORD MORDEN, *dressed*, HARRIET, (*from the antichamber*).

Lord M. [*to Lapelle*] Leave the room—I am sorry we were disturbed; your story, Madam, has interested me deeply: though too reprehensible for the irregularities of my own conduct, I cannot but condemn the licentious libertinism of this Sir Frederick—Indeed, I—I have reason, perhaps to dread it.

Har. A man of honour! among men, the ruin of woman he thinks as necessary to his fame as to his pleasure; and, like too many others of your cruel sex, holds it no crime to make war upon those who cannot defend themselves.

Lord M. But what do you propose, by this disguise, Madam?

Har. There is a contract, which I, indeed, refused, but which he forced upon me, to demonstrate, as he said, the purity of his intentions, wherein he bound himself, in a penalty of ten thousand pounds, to marry me within a month: for, in his fictitious raptures, he protested no sum, no proofs, could sufficiently express the ardour, and sanctity, of his affection.

Lord M. And have you this contract?

Har. Oh, no! The day preceding that on which it was my good fortune to discover his real designs, he asked to see, and artfully exchanged it, for a counterfeit copy.

Lord M. This contract you wish to regain?

Har. If possible; or some other unequivocal means of detection.

Lord M. And force him to marry you?

Har. Oh, no—To own the truth, I have a generous and a constant lover, who, perhaps, has been a little ill used.

Lord M. As most generous and constant lovers are.

Har. 'Tis too true.—To avenge him, and humble the pride of one who thinks himself too cunning for our whole sex, is my determination.

Lord M. Well, Madam, our's is a common cause—But, as we have both been imprudent, and invited misfortune, we must both endeavour to conceal our true feelings; mask our suspicions, and—Hush! Here he comes; and with him a lady, whose principles are as free as his own; but who has had the art so well to conceal her intrigues, and preserve appearances, that she is every where received in society.—I will introduce you, in your assumed character.

Har. Not now; let us withdraw—when he is alone. The fewer eyes are on me, the less liable I shall be to a discovery.

(Lord Morden and Harriet return to the antichamber just as Mrs. Modely and Sir Frederick appear.)

SCENE III. *Mrs. MODELY and SIR FREDERICK.*

Mrs. M. Really, Sir Frederick, there is no accounting for the strangeness of your present taste!—I pity you!—I foresee the downfall of your reputation!—What, you! who have vanquished so many elegant coquettes, and driven so many happy lovers mad; you! who were the very soul of our first societies, and whose presence made palpitate the hearts of belles and beaux; the first with hope and delight, the latter with fear and envy; you! fighting at the feet of a prude, and become the rival of a husband!

Sir F. [laughing] Deplorable!

Mrs. M. Have not you, for this month past, buried yourself in Lady Morden's sober society, and dozed over crown whist with her, night after night?—Nay
have

have not you attended her even to church; and, there, with a twang, joined the amen chorus of charity-children, paupers, and parish-clerks; sitting with your face drawn as long as its shadow at sun-set; and a look as demure and dismal—

Sir F. As poor Doctor Faustus, waiting for the Devil to come and fetch him—Ha, ha, ha!—Granted.

Mrs. M. And what do you think has been said of you, mean while, in the polite circles you have abandoned?—Your very best friends have been the very first to condemn you.

Sir E. That's natural—When we are guilty of any folly, our very best friends are always the very first to condemn us; to shew they neither advile nor countenance us.

Mrs. M. I thought the gay, young beauty, besieged by pleasures, surrounded by flatteries, who believes herself the goddess she is painted, to fix her wandering fancy, to humble and bring her to a sense of frailty; or, to supplant the happy, the adored, lover, while yet the breath is warm that vows eternal constancy; these, I imagined, were the only achievements worthy Sir Frederick Fashion!

Sir F. These have their eclat. But, to initiate a youthful, beauteous wife, who, from her childhood, has been accustomed to say her prayers, believe in virtue, and rank conjugal infidelity among the most heinous of the seven deadly sins; to teach her to doubt, fear, wish, tremble, and venture; to be a witness, afterward, of her repentance; her tears involuntarily falling, her eyes motionless, her form fixed, and the severe saint transformed to a statue of weeping sin; to read her fall in the public papers; be praised, reproached, admired, and curst, in every family in England; in short, to be for ever immortalized, in the annals of gallantry, and the hero of the tea-table for a whole month, for this will be no common vulgar wonder, this were glory equal to my ambition! And this glory I am determined to acquire: nay, it is, already, within my grasp.—This day, or, rather, this night, this very, blessed,

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ecstatic, night, shall I gain the greatest of all my victories!

Mrs. M. Insulting!

Sir F. Nay, my dear *Mrs. Modely*, you know my enthusiasm, and must not take exceptions—Nor can I, surely, be blamed. *Lady Morden* is a concealed hoard of native sweets, that delights the senses: while the made-up beauties we commonly meet, like artificial flowers, are all shew, and no fragrance.

Mrs. M. Raptures!

Sir F. Inferior to her, in form and perfection, as the *Venus* of a Dutch image hawker to the genuine Grecian Antique!

Mrs. M. It matters not wasting your rhetorick on this topic; for I will not give my consent to your pursuing this affair any further, *Sir Frederick*.

Sir F. You will not?

Mrs. M. I will not.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! Don't provoke me, my dear *Mrs. Modely*; don't provoke me.

Mrs. M. Nay, no threatening.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha!—Well—To arms then—War is the word.

Mrs. M. The choice remains with you.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha!

Mrs. M. *Lady Morden* is my relation; and, though I despise prudery, and know the world—

Sir F. [*aside*] That you do indeed.

Mrs. M. Yet—you can hardly suppose I will silently acquiesce in her ruin!

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! You—you forget yourself, dear Madam—These qualms would do vastly well, in some places; but, to me!—

Mrs. M. And why not to you, *Sir*!—Though I do allow myself a little liberty of conscience—

Sir F. Not a little. [*aside*]

Mrs. M. And though you—you—know I do, must I—in short, I have another favourite project, which I am determined not to give up.

Sir

Sir F. [aside] Oh ho ! But it will be best to avoid a rupture.—*[aloud]* May I ask what this favourite project may be ?

Mrs. M. You know the public affront General Burland gave me, last winter ; and you cannot suppose I have forgotten it.

Sir F. [aside.] No ; I know you better.—*[aloud]* Oh ! the General is an eccentric mortal ; licensed to say any thing ; and, instead of being listened to, is laughed at.

Mrs. M. Yes ; but I am determined he shall be punished.

Sir F. Which way ?

Mrs. M. His daughter, Emily, is a pretty, simple, girl—I mean, untutored, in the world.

Sir F. [conceiving her design] True !

Mrs. M. To see her married to a man of fashion would, at least, break his heart.

Sir F. [laughs] Infallibly !

Mrs. M. Your fortune, I believe, Sir Frederick, like your family seat, begins to want repairs ; and she is a rich heiress, with twenty thousand pounds at her own disposal, beside the General's estate, which must be her's—Why do you laugh so ?

Sir F. Oh ! the delights of anticipation !

Mrs. M. An—an—anticipation ?

Sir F. [still laughing] It is a part of my plan to carry her off, I mean to let her carry me off, this very night.

Mrs. M. Who ? Emily ?

Sir F. Emily.

Mrs. M. To night !

Sir F. This active, this important, this blissful, night !

Mrs. M. Lend me your eau de luce, you dyle !

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha !—This surprise from you, Mrs. Modely, is the supreme of panegyric.

Mrs. M. And have you made any advances to Emily ?

Sir F. Yes, yes—Ha, ha, ha !—I made advances to her, and she made advances to me—The conquest

was too easy—Were it not for the circumstance of the elopement, which will give the sauce a flavour the food wants, it would scarcely invite my appetite.

Mrs. M. But Lady Morden—

Sir F. Is mine, whenever I please to make my final attack. I am no bad orator, in general; but, in company with her, I feel inspired—am, absolutely, astonished at my own eloquence!—Nay, I have several times spoken with such energy, enthusiasm, and momentary conviction, in praise of virtue, that I have, actually, been in imminent danger of making a convert of myself!

Mrs. M. In praise of virtue?

Sir F. In praise of virtue. There is no making one of these virtuous visionaries rational, but by flattering their bigotry, and pretending to adore their idol; by pursuing which method, I have inured her to, and made her as familiar with, what is prudishly called vice, and vicious sentiments, as she is with her own thoughts.

Mrs. M. Yes, yes, vile rake: but, remember, I'll have no concern in this affair!—I—

Sir F. Oh, poh! Ay, ay, that is understood—You wink—and know nothing of the matter.

Mrs. M. Nay, but I, here, publicly protest against your proceedings!

Sir F. [*aside*] And will privately do your utmost to promote them.

Mrs. M. I exclaim against such licentiousness!

Sir F. I know you do—But if you are thus tender of her Ladyship's reputation, you will feel no repugnance at assisting me to irritate his Lordship's sensibility.

Mrs. M. What do you mean?

Sir F. To confess the truth, I am a little piqued at Lord Morden's want of feeling—I wish I could make him jealous.

Mrs. M. Jealous! Fie! He is too well bred.

Sir F. That's unfortunate—The antics of a jealous husband add highly to the enjoyment, as well as the reputation,

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reputation, of an amour.—The poor man is so injured, so enraged, so distressed, so industrious to publish his calamity, and is so sincerely pitied, and laughed at—must, positively, rouse my Lord to a sense of his misfortune; or it will want poignancy—A turtle feast without French wines!

Mrs. M. Well, should I find any opportunity of aiding you—

Sir F. Ay, ay; I have no doubt of your zeal in the cause.

Mrs. M. Nay, but, don't mistake me—I only mean as far as teasing his Lordship is concerned.

Sir F. Oh! Certainly—certainly.

Mrs. M. If his Lordship had any real cause for jealousy, I should, for Lady Morden's sake, be the—the—the—the most miserable creature upon earth.

Sir F. To be sure.

Mrs. M. But you seem mighty secure of your conquest.

Sir F. I am no novice; I can tell when a woman's time is come.—Besides, her Ladyship has granted me a rendezvous.

Mrs. M. When?

Sir F. Why, this very evening, to be sure.

Mrs. M. Where?

Sir F. Here, in this very house.

Mrs. M. Since you are so very certain, how came you not to take advantage of being alone with her after the rout?

Sir F. I did; that is, should have done, had we not been interrupted.

Mrs. M. By whom?

Sir F. A new footman—an odd kind of—Oh! here the very fellow comes.

SCENE IV. *Mrs. MODELY, SIR FREDERICK, GABRIEL, loitering and leering.*

Mrs. M. What does the rude lout peer at?

Sir F. Country curiosity.

Gab.

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Gab. [attempting to go once or twice, then pausing and turning back] Did—did—did your Ladyship's honour call?

Mrs. M. No.

Gab. [again going and turning] I—I thought, mayhap, you wanted my Lord.

Mrs. M. What should I want your Lord for, think you, friend?

Gab. Nay, ma'am; that's more nor I can tell.

Sir F. What is your name?

Gab. Gabriel, so't please you.—In my last place, they used to call me the Sly Simpleton.

Mrs. M. And who did you live with last?

Gab. Why, you an heard of my Lady's brother, the rich nabob, that be just come over fro' th' Eastern Indies?

Sir F. Mr. Wilmot?

Gab. Ees.—I do come fro' his estate; out o' Staffordshire.

Sir F. You are part of the live stock?

Gab. Anon!

Mrs. M. Were you in his service?

Gab. [hesitates] N—E—Ees.

Mrs. M. How long?

Gab. Better nor a week.

Sir F. What sort of a man is he?

Gab. Humph!—A be well enough, when h's pleased—tho' I canno' say as I do like him much, for a meas-ter.

Mrs. M. Why so?

Gab. Becase a'I neither let a servant tell lies nor take money.

Sir F. Indeed!

Gab. No—A 'wonnor—whereof, here, I find, I canno' please my Lady, if I donna tell lies; and, I canno' please myself, if I donna take money.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha!

Mrs. M. Ha, ha, ha! So, he did not suit you?

Gab. No.—A's too high flown, as 'twere, in's notions—

Sir

Sir F. Which way?

Gab. A makes a great case o' what a calls friendship, and honour, and honesty, and such like; and, you know, if a poor servant giv heed to that there sort o' stuff—a's not likely to get rich.

Mrs. M. Upon my word!

Sir F. So Mr. Wilmot's head is full of such nonsense, is it?

Gab. Oh! a's brimsful of such nonsense—and so were I, while I lived wi' he; which wur the reason, as I do suppose, that they called me a Simpleton—but I am not so simple as folk think me.

Sir F. [*aside to Mrs. Modely.*] My dear Mrs. Modely, leave me, for a moment, with this fellow.—You'll be upon the watch to throw in any hints, or aids, you happen to see necessary, and a-propos?

Mrs. M. Yes, yes—that is, for Emily, and the elopement—but be cautious; a defeat would turn the tables upon us, and make us the jest of the whole town, friends and enemies.

Sir F. How can you fear it?

Mrs. M. Nay, I do not; I know my Sex, and I know you.

SCENE V. SIR FREDERICK, GABRIEL.

Sir F. Gabriel is your name, you say?

Gab. Ees.

Sir F. You seem a sharp kind of fellow, and one that understands his own interest.

Gab. Ees—I understand my own interest.

Sir F. Are you, if occasion should offer, willing to do me a piece of service?

Gab. Humph!—What will you gi' me?

Sir F. I see you are a sensible fellow, and come to the point, at once.

Gab. Ees.—I love to come to the point.

Sir F. And you would not betray me, to any body?

Gab. Why—not unless somebody were to pay me better.

Sir

Sir F. Upon my honour, thou art the honestest rogue I ever met with.

Gab. Ees—that I be.

Sir F. Here—here is money for thee—and, observe, as thou seemest perfectly to understand a bargain, thou shalt have more, in proportion to thy fidelity and capacity; and, moreover—Canst thou read and write?

Gab. Ees.

Sir F. Well, then, be faithful, and I will get thee a place in the excise—And, now, observe—I—I have a—very great respect—and friendship for your Lady.

Gab. Ees, ees—As we sen ith' country, you have more nur a month's mind to her.

Sir F. How, sirrah!—Dare you suppose I have?—

Gab. Nay, now, belike, *you* think me a simpleton too!—Your great folk supposen a sarvant has neither ears nor eyes—But, lord, they are mistaken!—Ecod, their ears are often plaguy long.—What, mun, I wur no' so fast asleep as you thought me, i' the passage, this morning.

Sir F. [*aside*] The rascal!

Gab. Belike, becase I be a country lad, you reckon I should think it strange, like, that one gentleman should teak a liking to another gentleman's wife; but, lord, I know, well enough, that's nought, here—I ha' learned a little o' what's what—

Sir F. Nay, friend Gabriel, I am more and more convinced, thou art a clever, acute fellow.

Gab. Lord, mun, your worship need no' be so shy, like—You do know, you ha' promised me a place—an places that are no' bought one way—mun be bought another.

Sir F. Well said, friend Gabriel.

Gab. An, as for keeping o' family secrets, donno you fear me; becase why, I do find they be a sarvant's best parkizites—For, an it wur na for family secrets, how should so many poor country Johns so very soon become gentlemen?

Sir F. [*aside*] This fellow's thoughts run all in one channel; his ruling passion is money; the love of that

that sharpens his intellects, and opens his eyes and ears.—Well, Gabriel, you shall find me as generous as a Prince, provided—Here's somebody coming—go into the next room; I'll speak with you presently.

Gab. Ees.—But I do hope your honour's worship wunna forget the place, like?

Sir F. Never fear.

[*Gabriel goes into Lady Morden's dressing Room.*]

SCENE VI. SIR FREDERICK, EMILY.

Sir F. My angel! My angel!

Emily. Hush!—My papa is coming, and wants to take me away with him, home.

Sir F. Away!

Emily. Yes—hush—take no notice.

SCENE VII. GENERAL BURLAND, SIR FREDERICK, EMILY.

Gen. Come, Emily; are you ready?

Emily. I am always ready, and happy, to obey my dear papa; but surely, Sir, you will not let me leave Lady Morden, without so much as bidding her adieu?

Gen. I'll write a card of thanks to her Ladyship, with your respects, and as many compliments as you please.

Emily. Nay, but, dear Sir, consider—it will seem too abrupt. Lady Morden is so good, so kind—I would not give her a moment's pain for the world.—Besides, I have so many obligations to her Ladyship.

Gen. I begin to be afraid, child, lest you should have too many obligations to her Ladyship.

Emily. Let me only stay to-night, and to-morrow morning I will go with all my heart, and as early as you please, if you desire me.

Sir F. [*aside*] I protest she is bantering him!—Oh! the charming malicious little angel! [*aloud*]—Ay, General, let Emily stay to-night; I will answer for her, she will go to-morrow morning, as soon as you please, if you desire her.

Gen. You will answer for her !—

Sir F. Yes—Won't you permit me, Emily ?

Emily. [*curtsies*] My dear papa knows I never attempt to break my word.

Gen. Yes, my child ; I do know, you have, hitherto, been unspotted, and pure, as the morn blown lily ; and my anxiety that you should remain so makes me thus desirous of your quitting this house.—When I brought you here, these doors did not, so easily, fly open, at the approach of such fine, such accomplished, gentlemen as Sir Frederick Fashion.

Sir F. [*with vast pleasure*] By heavens, he anticipates his misfortunes ! [*aside*]

Emily. [*takes the General's hand*] Do, my dear papa, consent only for to day ; I don't ask any longer.

Sir F. [*aside*] I could hug the charming hypocrite !

Gen. Well, well, Emmy ; you know, I never deny you any thing : for, indeed, you never asked any thing that could give the most anxious and affectionate father a moment's pain.

Emily. [*kisses his hand*] I thank you, dear, dear Sir ; you have made me happy.

Sir F. By my life, I shall find this a much more agreeable affair than I hoped !—Yes, General—you—you are a very good papa.

Gen. You think so ?

Sir F. Yes—I do, upon my soul.

Gen. Then I am what you, I am afraid, will never be.

SCENE VIII. SIR FREDERICK.

Ha, ha, ha ! He does not suspect we are so soon to be so nearly related—Ha, ha, ha ! I should like to be present when he first hears the news—He—he will foam and bounce like a cork from a bottle of champagne.

SCENE IX. SIR FREDERICK, LORD MORDEN, *from the Anti-chamber.*

Lord M. Well, Sir Frederick, is her Ladyship returned ?

Sir

Sir F. Yes; she is dressing for dinner.—She bought the Actæon:

Lord M. She did?

Sir F. Oh, yes.—She is a charming woman!—the eyes of the whole room were upon her. There were some smart things said—One observed a likeness between me and Actæon; another thought it bore a far greater resemblance to your Lordship.

Lord M. Ha, ha, ha! About the head, no doubt?

Sir F. For my part, I said, I thought the likeness was very capable of being improved.

Lord M. You were very kind.

Sir F. Oh, pray, have you heard that Sir Peter Pry is going to sue for a bill of divorce?

Lord M. No.

Sir F. 'Tis very true. I should not have suspected Sir Peter of such vulgar revenge; but, I find, our married men of fashion are far less liberal in their sentiments than the Ladies.

Lord M. Ha, ha, ha! Yes; they often want a woman's philosophy in these matters.

Sir F. Yes—they are wasps, that fly and feed wherever they can find honey, but retain a sting for any marauder that shall approach their nests.

Lord M. Somewhat selfish, I own.

Sir F. Much more liable to be jealous than the women—and jealousy, your Lordship knows, is the most ridiculous, ill bred, contemptible thing in nature!

Lord M. Ha, ha, ha! Yes, yes—ha, ha, ha! Perfectly despicable.

Sir F. Oh, nothing so laughable as the vagaries of a jealous husband: no creature suffers so much, or is pitied so little.

Lord M. Ha, ha, ha! Ay—the thefts of love are applauded, not punished.

Sir F. Yes, and the poor robb'd husband, watchman like, twirls his rattle, alarms the neighbourhood, and collects assistants, who never fail to aid the thief, and laugh at him and his loss.

Lord M. Ye—ye—yes. Ha, ha, ha!—A husband is a very strange, ignominious animal.

Sir F. A jealous husband !

Lord M. A paltry, mechanical—

Sir F. Without an idea of life, or manners !

Lord M. Ha, ha, ha ! Very true—But, come with me ; there's a young gentleman, in the anti chamber, of a good family, who wishes to be introduced to you—A very pretty fellow—Has an ambition to do something which shall give him eclat, and is, therefore, desirous of being known to us men of the world.

Sir F. Well ! I am your's for a few minutes ; but I must attend Lady Morden at her toilette, presently.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

A C T III.

SCENE I. GENERAL BURLAND, LORD MORDEN, *meeting* : GABRIEL *introduces* GENERAL BURLAND.

General Burland.

WELL, my Lord, is Lady Morden to be seen ?
Gab. Oh ! Ees, your Worship, hur will be, anon ; for yonder is Sir Frederick, helping the maid to dress her Ladyship.

Gen. Helping to dress her Ladyship ?

Gab. Ees—They sent me for some milk of roses, here—[*showing the phial*] and, would you believe it, I wur sich an oaf, I had never heard, before, that roses gave milk.

Gen. Ah !—You are some half-taught country booby.

Gab.

Gab. Why, so I do find; for, in the country, the folk do only clear-starch their apions and ruffles; but, here, ecod, they clear-starch their faces.

Gen. Well, go, carry in your milk; and inform her Ladyship I am waiting her leisure—*[laughing within]*

Gab. Ecod, here they all come, your honour; and rare and merry they be. But your Londoneers do lead a rare, ranting, life!

SCENE II. GENERAL BURLAND, LORD MORDEN, SIR FREDERICK, LADY MORDEN, Mrs. MODELY. *The three last from Lady Morden's Dressing Room, laughing.*

Lady M. Ha, ha, ha!—Oh! You whimsical toad! You—Ha, ha, ha!—You have half killed me!—I am glad to see you in town, General!—We have been drawing the characters of our acquaintance, and Mrs. Modely, and Sir Frederick Fashion, have been so droll, and so satirical!

Gen. Ah! No doubt.

Lady M. I could not have thought there was so much satisfaction in remembering the failings of one's friends.

Mrs. Mod. Oh! It makes one so chearful!

Sir F. And keeps one so charmingly in countenance!

Gen. *[aside]* Which you stand in very great need of.

Sir F. I assure your Ladyship, you have an exquisite turn for satire; you cut with excessive keenness; and, yet, with a dexterity that makes the very patient tingle with pleasure.

Lady M. You are partial, "A little more experience will make these things quite familiar; but habit only can give one perfect ease."

Sir F. "Oh! Habit!—Habit is a wonderful thing!"
"—Have you heard the anecdote of the Newmarket-Jockey?"

Lady M. "No; what is it?"

Sir F. "Why, a Jockey, having had a bad run at the last October meeting, was willing to correct the errors of Fortune by turning his lead to gold; accordingly, on Epping Forest, he stopped Major Warboys, and bade him deliver; to which the Major, being one of those singular officers who think it some disgrace to be robb'd, replied by firing his pistol—The ball happened to be fatal—the horse set off—and, to shew the effect of habit, the body of the Jockey kept its seat as far as the stable door, and there deliberately tumbled off; nay, some go so far as to assert it was seen to rise in the stirrups; but that, I believe, wants confirmation.

Lord M. } "Ha, ha, ha!"

Mrs. Mod. }

Lady M. "Pshaw! You tragi comic wretch!"

Lord M. I think you had not much company last night.

Lady M. Your Lordship was so well bred, and made your visit so short, else you would have found a great deal.

Mrs. Mod. Oh, yes, they poured in, from all quarters.

Sir F. Sir Nathan Neaptide, the yellow admiral, came.

Lord M. An agreeable guest!

Mrs. Mod. Oh! rude as his own boatswain.

Sir F. "Would teach a starling blasphemy, rather than want good conversation,—"

Lady M. "He attempts satire."

Lord M. "But utters abuse."

Mrs. Mod. That makes him so much respected.

Lady M. Yes; like a chimney-sweeper in a crowd, he makes his way by being dirty.

Sir F. I protest, your Ladyship is prodigiously brilliant to day!

Lady M. No, no—Though I am a vast admirer of wit. A person of wit has one very peculiar, and enviable, advantage.

Lord M. What is that, madam?

Lady

Lady M. Long life.

Lord M. Long life!

Lady M. Yes. A wit has more ideas, consequently lives longer, in one hour than a fool in seven years.

Sir F. For which reason, your Ladyship is, already, three times the age of old Par.

Lady M. Dear, Sir Frederick, that is so gallant.

Mrs. Mod. And so new.

Gen. Why, yes—This is the first time I ever heard a Lady told she was old, and receive it as a compliment!

Lord M. But, your visitors—Who had you next?

Mrs. Mod. There was Sir Jeremy Still-life.

Lady M. [*mimics*] And his bouquet. He primmed himself up in one corner, and seemed to think that, like the image of a Saint on a holiday, he was powdered and painted on purpose to be adored.

Mrs. Mod. He was not singular in that.

Lady M. Oh, no; there was a whole row of them that, like jars and mandarins on a mantle-piece, look'd vastly ornamental, and served charmingly to fill up vacancies.

Gen. Every trifle has its use.

Mrs. Mod. Lord Index came, and stalk'd round the rooms, as if he had been loaded with the wisdom of his whole library.

Lady M. Yes, he look'd as solemn as a monkey after mischief.

Sir F. [*mimicking his solemnity*] And drew up his face in form, like a writ of inquiry into damages, with a TAKE-NOTICE engrossed in front.

Lord M. He would not stay late, for his Lordship is as careful of his health as he is vain of his understanding.

Lady M. And, yet, he is but a kind of rush-candle; he may glimmer a long while, but will never give much light.

Lord M. It seems strange that your people, who have acquired a little knowledge, always think they possess an infinite deal; while those, who are the best informed

informed, appear continually conscious of wanting more.

Gen. Not strange at all, my Lord. Amassing knowledge, is like viewing the sun through a telescope ; you enlarge the object, but you destroy the glare.

Mrs. Mod. Did not you observe that, notwithstanding the pearl-powder, my Lady Bloom's neck looked remarkably fallow ?

Lord M. Oh ! As a Jew's face under a green umbrella.

Sir F. The widow Twinkle, as usual, talked a vast deal about reputation.

Lady M. One is apt to admire a thing one wants.

Lord M. She always takes infinite pains to place her reputation, like broken china in a buffet, with the best side outward.

Lady M. She may plaister, and cement, but will never bring it to bear handling.

Mrs. Mod. Mr. Pensive, the poet, came in, too.

Sir F. Yes, but as nobody took any notice of him, he presently went out again.

Gen. A great proof of his good sense.

Sir F. Your poets, and sheriff's officers, are a kind of people every body has heard of, but that nobody chuses to know.

Lady M. Or, if you are under the necessity of receiving a private call from them, now and then, it would be quite disgraceful to be seen with them in public.

Lord M. Your Ladyship used to be very partial to Mr. Pensive.

Gen. Yes, her Ladyship *used* to have many singular partialities. She was once partial to merit and virtue, wherever she found them : she had a partiality for order, œconomy, and domestic duties, likewise : nay, she even went so far as to cherish a partiality for your Lordship !

Lady M. Ha, ha, ha ! Odious partialities !

Sir F.

Mrs. Mod. } Ha, ha, ha !

Lord

Lord M. Ma—Ma—Madam! Odious?

Lady M. Ha, ha, ha! To—to be sure, Sir!—Is it not odious to be unfashionable?

Mrs. Mod. Certainly—Ha, ha, ha!

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha!—I protest, General, you—Ha, ha, ha! You are too severe.

Gen. Am I?

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! You are, really.

Mrs. Mod. Ha, ha, ha! Yes, you are, indeed, General. } (all together)

Lady M. Ha, ha, ha! Yes, yes, you absolutely are.

Gen. Humph—Why don't you laugh, my Lord?

Lord M. I do. Ha, ha, ha!—I—I—I do, General—Though, as to severity, I own I—I don't see it in that light.

Gen. No!

Lord M. No—I cannot accuse myself of any fault; unless the love of pleasure be one.

Gen. Hah! [*sighs*] And your catalogue of pleasures, I fancy, is pretty extensive.

Lord M. Not half so extensive as one could wish.

Gen. A dice-box, for instance, is one.

Lord M. A very principal one.

Lady M. My short experience hardly entitles me to venture an opinion, but I find a wonderful similarity between gaming and a cold bath—You have a—a tremor—a—a hesitation, at first; but, having once plunged in, you are thrown into the most delightful glow!

Lord M. Oh, an ardent tingling—

Gen. Beware, Sir, that a shivering fit does not succeed.

Mrs. Mod. } Ha, ha, ha!

Lady M.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha!—You really have no mercy, General—You hit so often, and so hard, egad!

Lord M. I'm vastly—happy—to see you all so merry—Tho'—upon my honour—I can't find out the jest.

Gen. That is strange, when you yourself make it.

Lady

Lady M. Not in the least—There is many a professed joker who does not understand his own wit.

Gen. [*half aside*] I am tired, disgusted, with this mixture of folly and wickedness—[*aloud*] May I intrude so far upon your Ladyship as to obtain half an hour's private conversation?

Lady M. Why—Upon my word—General—I—I have so many affairs on hand, to day, that I must beg you—to excuse me:—To-morrow you may command me, for as long as you please.

Sir F. Ay, do, General, have the complaisance to wait till to-morrow, when my Lady will be more at leisure.

Gen. [*deeply affected*] Well, madam, I did not use to be thought an intruder, by your Ladyship, and will not begin now—But, since I cannot have the honour to tell you privately, I shall think myself bound to do my duty, and inform you, publicly, you are in the hands of sharpers, “who will filch from you your good name.”—[*with great anxiety*] Nay, perhaps, you are on the very eve of destruction!—Oh guilt!—Can it be!—My heart is full!—I—[*goes up to her, and most affectionately takes and presses her hand.*] Lady Morden—I have no utterance—But, if there be such a thing as sympathy, some small portion of the horror I now feel will communicate itself to you.

SCENE III. LORD MORDEN, SIR FREDERICK,
LADY MORDEN, MRS. MODELY.

(*Lady Morden seems affected, Lord Morden deeply so, Sir Frederick and Mrs. Modely disconcerted.*)

A PAUSE.

Lady M. [*endeavouring to recover herself*] The—the General—has the—strangest way of—affecting—and harrowing—Has not he, my Lord?

Lord M. Ye—yes—Upon my honour, he—he—I don't know how—[*putting his hand to his heart*].

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha!—The General—The General is a true Don Quixote. He first creates giants, and then kills them.

Lady

Lady M. Yes, Ha, ha, ha!—His head is full of—
of windmills to grind moral sentiments—But, come,
Mrs. Modely, you have not seen my new purchase.

Mrs. Mod. Oh, what the Afton?

Sir F. Is it come home?

Lady M. Oh, yes—I could not rest till I had it.
[*talking as they are going off*].

Mrs. Mod. Come, my Lord—I long to see it!

Lady M. The tints are charming!

Mrs. Mod. So I hear—The grouping excellent!

Lady M. Oh, delightful!

SCENE IV. HARRIET, *from the Anti-chamber*,
SIR FREDERICK.

Har. Hift!—Sir Frederick!

Sir F. [*turning back*] Oh!—Well, Sir, how proceeds your amour? I thought you had been busied in schemes about that affair.

Har. Faidth, and I am so—But I don't believe I can succeed, without your assistance.

Sir F. Perhaps you are a little scrupulous about the means.

Har. Me!—Indeed and you have mistaken your man—Why, you don't think, Sir Frederick, I regard the complaints or tears of women!—You and I, sure, seek our own gratification, not their happiness—For, if the love of man sought only the happiness of woman, faidth, there would be nothing but dull marriages, fond husbands, and legitimate children; and we should lose all the satisfaction of seducing wives, ruining daughters, and of bringing so many fine, sweet, innocent, craters upon the town!

Sir F. Oh, it would strangely reverse the order of things.

Har. Order,!—Faidth, and it would occasion a blissed confusion—in Doctor's Commons.

Sir F. For my part, present pleasure is my pursuit; I never disturb my imagination with disinal consequences.

Har.

Har. Faith, and you are right—For, as you say, it would be dismal enough to trace these consequences into—into streets, and hospitals, and—places that the imagination sickens at.

Sir F. Marriage, you say, is not your object.

Har. Oh; no! I don't like that said matrimony music.

Sir F. A mortgaged rent-roll, only, can make it supportable. A wife is like a child's whistle, which every breath can play upon, but which no art can make melodious.

Har. Faith, and you have very proper notions about wives. So when the dare crater gave a marriage hint, why, I told her a dale of boister, confarning an old cross fadther, and being under age, and that I could not marry these three months. For, you know, one does not stand for a good double handful of oaths, and lies, when one wants to ruin a sweet, kind, angel, that one loves.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha!—Suppose you were to make a sham marriage.

Har. A sham marriage?—Faith, and I would make that, if there were not a parcel of low rascals, that, make halters.

Sir F. Pshaw! That's a paltry, mechanical, fear.

Har. But, you—you were telling me, you know, of—a—scheme—

Sir F. Oh! The contract.

Har. Ay, faith! The contract. You said you would shew it me.

Sir F. I will—I have brought it for that purpose [*feeling for his pocket-book*]. I, lately, found it an efficacious expedient.

Har. And successful?

Sir F. Would have been, but for an unlucky accident.

Har. But there is one small impediment,

Sir F. What is that?

Har. Westminster hall.

Sir F. Baw! A house of cards.

Har.

Har. Oh, and that it is; for 'tis supported by knaves, and full of tricks.

Sir F. Here—here is the very contract I myself gave.

Har. Ay! [*endeavouring to conceal her eagerness.*]

Sir F. And here a counterfeit copy, with a few slight, but essential, alterations.

Har. I understand—To put the change upon her. [*with an anxious eye, continually, towards the contract.*]

Sir F. Which you may easily take, or make, an opportunity to do.

Har. [*with affected indifference*] Will, thin, lind them both to me; and, saidth, you shall see fine divarision.

Sir F. No—I—I'll have them copied for you. This is signed, and sealed.

Har. Arrah, what of that?—Ha, ha, ha! Sure, you are not afraid you would be obliged to matry a man?

Sir F. No—The only danger, in trusting them to you, is that of losing them. And, even then, there could be no ill consequence; except by falling into the hands of one who is far enough from London.

Har. Ay, ay, lit me have them—I give you my honour to make a proper use of them.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! You are a promising youth, and it would be a pity such talents should be baulked—So, here—here.

Har. Promising? Oh, saidth, and I hope to surprise even you, yourself. You shall presently hear of the success of your schaines.

SCENE V. SIR FREDERICK, GABRIEL.

Gab. [*looking after Harriet*] There a' goes—Hop, step, and jump!—(*Pause*)—Ecod, she does it feartly!

Sir F. She! What's that you say?

Gab. How a' skipp'd into the carriage!—There! Off it drives! Whur-r-r! Rattling away!

Sir F. What does the fellow mean?—S'death!—Sure!—Who are you talking of?

Gab. Why, of that Irish, gentleman-like, Lady.

Sir F. Lady!

Gab. I wur coming straight to tell you—There is a plot, mun, against you!

Sir F. A plot! [*runs towards the door.*]

Gab. Nay, you are too late!—A's gone!—Three streets off by this.

Sir F. Confusion!

Gab. Ees—She means to breed a confusion.]

Sir F. Who?

Gab. Miss Harriet.

Sir F. Harriet!—By heavens 'tis she!—

Gab. Ees—'tis she.

Sir F. Secure fool! Ineffable idiot!—And, yet, in that disguise, Lucifer himself could not have discovered her!—And who told you?

Gab. Why, his worship's gentleman, Mr. Lapelle—A' o'erheard her tell my Lord aw her plot.

Sir F. What course shall I take?

Gab. Suppose I wur to watch, and, when she comes back, let your worship know?

Sir F. Do so—But be very careful—And be very secret.

Gab. Ees, ees; I remember the place, mun.

Sir F. Away—be watchful and be-rewarded.

S C E N E VI. SIR FREDERICK.

This is a thunder stroke!—Lord Morden in the plot, too!—It will come to Lady Morden's ears, I shall be blown, all my plans disconcerted, myself laughed at, and my reputation eternally ruined!—*[walks about]* Ha!—There is one way to prevent the mischief, yet—By heavens, it cannot fail!—I will go to Lady Morden, and, with feigned penitence, tell her every circumstance, myself; only making her believe I knew Harriet, when I returned the contract. She will admire my candour, think my contrition real, and thus will I turn this seeming disaster to excellent account, by making it an additional proof of sincerity, and affection for her Ladyship!—Dear Wit, I thank thee;

thee ; thou never forsakeest me at a crisis !—Indeed !—My Lord ! And my young Lady !—Ah, ha !—But you shall find one, perhaps, who can plot, as deeply as yourselves.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

A C T. IV.

SCENE I. LORD MORDEN, LAPELLE.

Lord Morden.

INTO what an abyss of evils have I plunged, through inexperience, want of reflection, and an absurd imitation of fashionable follies !—Lapelle.

Lap. My Lord.

Lord M. Is the young—young gentleman returned ?

Lap. [*significantly*] No, my Lord.

Lord M. I am on the rack ;—The liberties in which Lady Morden permits this Sir Frederick are insupportable !—Unable to be silent, and ashamed to complain, I am tortured by contending passions—Lapelle—Let me know the instant—the—the young gentleman comes back.

Lap. [*going*] Yes, my Lord.

Lord M. Stay—*[to himself]* What if I were to inform Lady Morden of this affair ?—Surely, she could not shut her eyes against such a palpable, such an unprincipled, attempt at seduction !—*[aloud]* Go, and tell your Lady, I beg to speak with her, a moment.

SCENE II. LORD MORDEN.

What an absurd being is man !—Not a fortnight ago, Lady Morden was totally indifferent to me ; and now I am in danger of losing her, I find I love her—To distraction love her !—Yet to sink into a civil, sober, domestic, man—To become the standing jest of all those high-spirited companions whose society I

have courted, whose maxims I have pretended to admire!—

SCENE III. LORD MORDEN, LADY MORDEN.

Lady M. So, my Lord, in melancholy contemplation; and at home, too!

Lord M. Yes, madam.

Lady M. Lud! I wonder how your Lordship can endure home! Of all places, in the world, home is, certainly, the most disagreeable.

Lord M. Did not your Ladyship meet Lapelle?

Lady M. Lapelle! no.

Lord M. I—I wished to see your Ladyship.

Lady M. To see me! What can your Lordship possibly want with me?

Lord M. To speak to you.

Lady M. Speak to me!—You perfectly surprise me.

Lord M. On a subject which—I—I scarcely know how to begin.

Lady M. Ha, ha, ha! What can have made your Lordship so serious? Ha, ha, ha! I declare, I never saw you look so grave before!—This must be some very important secret, that can occasion your Lordship to look so very dismal!—I vow, I am quite impatient—Come, my Lord—Why don't you proceed?

Lord M. I—I begin to find—I have been very foolish.

Lady M. Ha, ha, ha! Is that the secret?

Lord M. I—I feel I have been to blame.

Lady M. To blame, my Lord! How? Which way?—Or, if you have, how does it concern me?

Lord M. Your Ladyship used to think our interests inseparable.

Lady M. For which your Lordship always laughed at me. And, I freely own, I was a very silly—out of the way woman.

Lord M. Perhaps not, madam.

Lady M. How, my Lord!—Not?—Your Lordship is very polite, but you know very well I was.

Lord

Lord M. Lady Morden, you once loved me—You yourself, not long since, kindly owned you did.

Lady M. Very true, my Lord; but why—why now should you reproach me with my follies?

Lord M. I feel the severity of your reproof—It is no more than I merit!

Lady M. [*with affected surprise*] I, really, don't understand your Lordship!—I—I meant no reproof—We loved each other as long as it was agreeable to us, and, if my passion happened to outlast your Lordship's, that was none of your fault. These are the principles of—of all rational people, you know, my Lord.

Lord M. They are principles, madam, that, from my soul, I wish I had never heard!

Lady M. Upon my honour, you astonish me!—Have not I learnt them from you, yourself?

Lord M. Unjustifiable, madam, as my conduct may have been, I never carried them to the same excess as Sir Frederick Fashion.

Lady M. [*with an air of pique*] Sir Frederick Fashion may, perhaps, be as capable of reformation as your Lordship.

Lord M. Your Ladyship may—may be partial.

Lady M. Partial!

Lord M. Who so great a libertine as this Sir Frederick?

Lady M. Has been—He has candour enough to confess it.

Lord M. Has been!—Madam, there exists a present proof of deliberate seduction!—An injured Lady!

Lady M. [*smiling*] Oh! What the—the, the Croat.

Lord M. Madam!

Lady M. What's your surprise, my Lord? Don't I tell you he has confessed all his follies to me?

Lord M. But, madam, did he mention the contract.

Lady M. To be sure! And the—the counterfeit copy—With the generous manner in which he, just now, returned Harriet the original; though she thought he did not know her.

Lord M. I am petrified!—Lady Morden—I perceive, I have lost your affections.

Lady M. My Lord—I am above dissimulation. Yes—I own I have a passion, too permanent to be shaken; and the satisfaction of a self-assurance that he who, at present, possesses my heart, will not so soon, be weary of me, as he who had it before.

Lord M. You cut me to the soul!—Did you know what I feel!

Lady M. Feel, my Lord! Ha, ha, ha! Oh fie!—Your Lordship is a man of fashion, not of feeling.

Lord M. Hovering mischief, madam, has quickened benumbed nature in me. [*kneels and takes her hand*] Oh! let me conjure you, Lady Morden, to reflect on your present situation! I have conducted you to the horrid precipice of guilt, and destruction! Oh, suffer me to save, to snatch, you from danger!

Lady M. Ha, ha, ha!

SCENE IV. LORD MORDEN, LADY MORDEN,
SIR FREDERICK.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! How now, my Lord! Ha, ha, ha! Making love to your wife?

Lady M. Ha, ha, ha! Oh! Sir Frederick, if you had but come a little sooner, you would have heard the most delightful morality!

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! Morality from my Lord?

Lord M. Yes, Sir, morality from my Lord!

Lady M. Ha, ha, ha! Nay, I assure you, he is quite serious. [*retires coquetting with Sir Frederick*]

Lord M. Rejected! Ridiculed! Despised! Their sport! Their scorn!—Their subject for open sarcasm, laughter, and contempt! Oh! Insupportable. [*Lord Morden retires into his own room.*]

SCENE V. LADY MORDEN, SIR FREDERICK.

Lady M. Ha, ha, ha! My Lord has a mind to fall in love with me, once more.

Sir F. Nobody, but my Lord, madam, would ever have ceased, a moment, to love you!

Lady

Lady M. Well, Sir Frederick, and may I, then, at last, flatter myself I have found that sympathy of soul, for which I so long have sighed?

Sir F. Alas, madam, I dare not rank myself your equal!—No, I dare not!—There is such infinitude of perfection in your every thought, look, and expression, that to merit you were to be, as you are, something celestial!—Yet such virtue as mere humanity may arrive at, I will exhaust nature with endeavours, and weary heaven with prayers, to acquire!

Lady M. There is, surely, some secret charm in your words.

Sir F. Did I think the gratification of any sinister passion influenced my present conduct; were it not my hope to remove you from the cold embrace of satiated apathy, to the sweet and endless transports of love, founded on, permit me to say, on a congeniality of soul and sentiment; did I not feel an innate conviction that there, already, subsists, between us, a tie of the most indissoluble nature, an immaculate tie, a marriage of the mind, superior infinitely to all human institutions; did I not think, and feel, thus, I would, instantly, dreadful as the image is to thought, renounce that heaven which I have had the presumption to contemplate, nay aspire to possess!

Lady M. And if, after all this, you should prove false, Sir Frederick!

Sir F. False, madam!—Oh! Let me conjure you to inflict any punishment on me, rather than that of suspecting my sincerity!—Thus, kneeling, on this angelic hand, I vow——

SCENE VI. LADY MORDEN, SIR FREDERICK,
LORD MORDEN.

Lord M. I cannot resist the impulse which—How!—Sir Frederick!

Sir F. [*rising*] My Lord. [*with perfect indifference.*]

Lord M. So, madam!

Lady M. So, Sir.

Lord

Lord M. You can listen to *morality* from others, madam, if not from me!

Lady M. Oh! I—I have no dislike to a sermon, when I—admire the preacher.

Lord M. Madam—If you have no respect for my honour, you might have some for my feelings, and—

Lady M. [interrupting him] A, a—Hold, hold, my Lord—You are beginning your *discourse* again; but I am in a hurry, and will hear you draw your conclusions some other opportunity.

Lord M. Madam—

Lady M. Nay, I will, upon my honour.

SCENE VII. LORD MORDEN, SIR FREDERICK.

Lord M. Hold, Sir; a word with you, if you please.

Sir F. With me, my Lord?

Lord M. With you.

Sir F. Willingly. Your Lordship seems in so pleasant a humour—

Lord M. Sir, I am in a humour neither to be trifled with nor sneered at.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! I can assure your, Ha, ha, ha! your Lordship, no man is happier to see you in your present temper than I am.

Lord M. Look you, Sir Frederick, you and I have been too long of the same school for me to be ignorant of your principles. But I begin to detest them!

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha!

Lord M. They are now, at this very moment, rending my heart. They have planted a nest of adders in my bosom.—In short, Sir—You must forbear your visits to Lady Morden.

Sir F. My Lord—

Lord M. I am serious—determined.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! When her *Ladyship* gives me this advice, it may—perhaps—be followed.

Lord M. It must and shall be followed, Sir, when I give it.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha!

Lord

Lord M. Ridiculous as it may appear, to you, and such as you, I feel, and will assert, a husband's rights.

Sir F. Ha, ha, ha! I congratulate your Lordship, on the keenness, and delicacy, of your feelings; they give me great pleasure; infinite pleasure, upon my soul. Ha, ha, ha!—As to—a husband's rights, I—have no doubt, you will—very shortly—be in full possession of them all.

Lord M. Sir, I will have you know, I am at present, in full possession of them all.

Sir F. May be so, egad!

Lord M. And can no longer forbear telling you, I believe you to be a villain.

Sir F. Ah, now, your Lordship is perfectly explicit. *(draw and fight.)*

SCENE VIII. LORD MORDEN, SIR FREDERICK, GABRIEL, *who runs fearlessly between them, and looks first at one, then at the other.*

Lord M. How now, sirrah! How dare you take this liberty?

Gab. Nay, ecod, there do seem to be some danger in it; an I had not dared to dare, but that I thought that your Lordship wou'd na stick I.

Lord M. Begone, sirrah!

Gab. Nay, but my Lady sent me, and would be glad to speak wi' your honour's worship.

Lord M. With me?

Gab. Oh no! Not wi' your Lordship's honour's worship; but wi' his worship's honour, Sir Frederick's Fashion.

Sir F. This is no place, my Lord: we'll settle this to-morrow—To-morrow, my Lord—To-morrow—

SCENE IX. LORD MORDEN, GABRIEL.

Lord M. Damnation!—Torture!—To-morrow?—He has some concealed meaning—"A thousand little circumstances tell me, some mischief is brooding—" I could not have believed Lady Morden so confirmed, so far gone, in guilt.—The behaviour of them all, "their

“ their dark allusions, their sarcasms, pointed at me, convince me, they are acting in conjunction, to hold me up”—How now, sirrah! What do you stand gaping at?—How durst you come between us?

Gab. Why, ecod, I knew that, wi’ us, i’th the country, murder would have been against the commandements; and I had forgot that, here, in town, you have no commandements.

Lord M. This fool can see the excesses of passion in their true light.

Gab. I’m sorry ‘at I angered your Lordship’s worship; becase as why, I wur determined to do like the rest of my neighbours; for, sartinely, wur a body to keep the commandements, while every body else is breaking them—a’d be a poor devil, indeed. [*Lord Morden walks about*] Belike, your Lordship be a bit jealousy like?

Lord M. How, sirrah!

Gab. Nay, I should no’ a’ wondered an you wur—An I had no’ been told that your Lōdoneers be never jealousy, like.

Lord M. Should not have wondered!—Why not, sirrah?

Gab. Nay, ecod, I munna tell!

Lord M. Tell what?

Gab. Nay, that’s it—As I said, I munna tell!

Lord M. [*puts his hand to his sword*] Speak all you know, instantly, or—

Gab. [*with half serious half sulky reproof*] Nay, nay, donna be in a passion, your worship—I be no goose, you munna spit me.

Lord M. Speak, I say—I’ll have your secret, or your soul.

Gab. Ecod, I believe, your worship will be puzzled to find either—Tho’ that Sir Frederick be an old fox—A’s used to steal chicken.

Lord M. Be explicit; what has he done?

Gab. Done—Oh!—A’s—

Lord M. What?

Gab. Promised me a place!

Lord

Lord M. Zounds!

Gab. And, moreover, a' ga' me a purse; which is better still: for, your worship's grace do know that, an egg, in hand, is better nur a hen, in expectation.

Lord M. Suppose, firrah, I give you my purse, too.

Gab. Nay, ecod, an you gi' it me—I b'lieve, I shall—I shall take it.

Lord M. There, Sir.

Gab. Thank your worship's Lordship.—[*Gabriel puts up the purse, and walks leisurely into Lady Morden's Dressing-Room.*]

SCENE X. LORD MORDEN, HARRIET.

Lord M. [following Gabriel] Why, hark you, firrah!—Come back!—Why, rascal!

Har. [calling] St! My Lord! My Lord!

Lord M. [looking back to Harriet, and then recollecting Gabriel] Astonishing effrontery!

Har. My Lord!

Lord M. [returning] Oh! Madam, I am distracted.

Har. Have patience, but for one quarter of an hour, and I hope to rid you of all your fears, and inflict that punishment, on the author of them, which he dreads most.

Lord M. How, Madam?

Har. By exposing him; making him what he delights to make others, a subject of laughter and contempt.

Lord M. Which way, Madam?

Har. We may be overheard; step with me into the antichamber, and I'll inform you.

SCENE XI. GABRIEL, SIR FREDERICK.

Gab. [peeping after Lord Morden and Harriet, and then calling] Sir Frederick!—Sir Frederick!

Sir F. Well, what's the matter? How comest thou off with his Lordship?

Gab. Off? Ecod, I—I wish you may come off as well.

Sir F. I!

Gab.

Gab. Ees—Why, mun, there be the bailiffs, below!

Sir F. Bailiffs!

Gab. Ees—Sent by the Irish gentleman, lady I mean, a'ter your worship!—Ecod, hur is' detarmined to ha' you, safe!

Sir F. The Devil! What's to be done!—Is she with them?

Gab. No; hur be come back, and is gone into the antichamber, wi' my Lord.

Sir F. And has not seen them?

Gab. Likely not.

Sir F. Here, quick, change clothes with me, and tell them you are Sir Frederick Fashion.

Gab. Me!—Ecod, thank you for that—No, no—I would na' be in your coat for fifty pound!

Sir F. Fool! they durst not detain you.

Gab. I'll take care they shan't.

Sir F. S'death! What's to be done?

Gab. Ecod—Suppose—Suppose I wur to go, and tell the Irish gentleman somebody wanted *hur*; and so make 'em arrest she?

Sir F. Ha! Exquisite fellow! I conceive—Away, lend her instantly!

SCENE XII. SIR FREDERICK, two BAILIFFS.

Bailiff. Is your name Sir Frederick Fashion, Sir?

Sir F. No, Sir; but Sir Frederick will be here directly; if you have any business with him.

Bailiff. [aside to his companion] Have your handkerchief ready, should he make any noise, for fear of a rescue—This is a very serious affair. *[to Sir Frederick]* Pray, Sir, what kind of person is Sir Frederick?

Sir F. Um—a handsome—agreeable little gentleman, and very young.

Bailiff. May, I ask, Sir, how he is dressed?

Sir F. [aside] Gad! well remembered—*[to the bailiffs]* Dressed, oh! he is dressed for the masquerade—Here he comes. *[the Bailiffs retire a little upon the watch.]*

SCENE XIII. SIR FREDERICK, BAILIFFS, HARRIET.

Sir F. [to Harriet] Well, Sir Frederick! Ha, ha, ha! How goes your scheme?

Har. Oh, ho!—Faith, and are you so jocular?

Sir F. I have been thinking this is a dangerous business, and would advise you not to give the girl that contract—It may bring you into trouble.

Bailiff. [aside to his companion] You hear!

Har. Oh! Faith, and she has it safe enough.

Bailiff. [advances] Sir Frederick Fashion [touches Harriet on the shoulder], you are my prisoner, Sir,—I have a special writ against you.

Har. Ha, ha, ha! Against me!—Arrah, frind, but you are making a bit of a bull here.

Bailiff. We know what we are about, Sir; my carriage is below; you shall be treated like a gentleman; but we must beg you to go with us, instantly, and without noise.

Har. [alarmed and forgetting the brogue] I tell you, friend, you mistake the person.

SCENE XIV. SIR FREDERICK, HARRIET, BAILIFFS, GABRIEL.

Gab. [goes up to Harriet] Here, Sir Frederick; here be a card, from Colonel Castoff, wi' his compliments.

Har. Sirrah! Me!

Gab. [with pretended astonishment] Ees to be sure!

Bailiff. Sir we must be gone.

Har. This is a concerted trick—Here—[as soon as Harriet begins to call, the bailiffs clap the handkerchief over her mouth, and hurry off with her.]

SCENE XV. GABRIEL, SIR FREDERICK.

Gab. Did not I do it rarely?

Sir F. Do!—I could wonder and worship thee!
In half a year, thou would'st make an ass of Machiavel!

vel!—Oh that I could but retrieve that cursed contract.

Gab. I do think I could get it.

Sir F. Ay!—Nay, I do, almost, begin to believe in miracles! Which way?

Gab. No matter for that—What will you gi'me?

Sir F. Whatever thou canst wish—A hundred guineas—

Gab. And the place in the Excise.

Sir F. Any thing, every thing!—Run, try, fly!—Think, succeed, and I'll make an Emperor of thee!

Gab. Ees—I'll be Emperor of Excise men.

SCENE XVI. SIR FREDERICK, MRS. MODELY, EMILY.

Sir F. The shrewdness, and abilities, of this fellow are amazing!

Mrs. Mod. [*entering*] Yes, my sweet little Emily, the greatest beauty in London would be envied, had she made such a conquest.

Emily. Ah!—You say so.—

Mrs. Mod. Say! Why, to-morrow morning, the whole town will be in a flame!

Emily. Well, that will be pure!

Mrs. Mod. Oh! Sir Frederick—

Sir F. [*runs to Emily*] My life! My soul! My transport!

Emily. [*to Mrs. Modely*] What sweet words!

Mrs. Mod. You are very much obliged to me, I assure you.—I have been speaking to my sweet, dear, little Emily, here, in your behalf.

Sir F. Then, Madam, I am inexpressibly, obliged to you!

Emily. Yes, Mrs. Modely is very much your friend, and very much my friend—A'n't you, Mrs. Modely.

Mrs. Mod. Yes, my little dear; I am, indeed, very much your friend: and, if I had not the best opinion in the world of Sir Frederick, would not have spoken as I have.

Emily.

Emily. Well, Sir Frederick, have you ordered the chaise and four?

Sir F. [*pretending to be afraid Mrs. Modely should overbear*]. Yes!—Hush!

Emily. Nay, you may say any thing before Mrs. Modely. I have told her all; for, you know, she is my friend.

Mrs. Mod. Yes, yes, Sir Frederick; be assured, I will not betray any secret, the keeping of which will make my dear Emily so happy!

Emily. Yes, we shall be so happy!—You know, Sir Frederick, you swear to marry me.

Sir F. Solemnly! [*all through the scene he looks anxiously round, at intervals, fearful of being surprised.*]

Emily. Well, but, swear it again; now, before Mrs. Modely.

Sir F. By all the saints!

Emily. Saints! Pshaw! You should swear by—by my bright eyes, that dim the stars.

Sir F. Oh! By those bright eyes, that dim the blazing Sun.

Emily. And—and, my beauties, that eclipse the blushing Moon!

Sir F. Ay, by those, and all your burning charms, I swear.

Emily. To marry me, the moment we come to Scotland?

Sir F. The moment we come to Scotland.

Emily. And, if we are pursued—

Sir F. To fight for you! Die for you!

Emily. Oh! That will be delightful—

Sir F. [*aside*] The Devil it will!

Emily. Come, let us set off!—My bandbox is ready!

Sir F. That is impossible, my angel!

Emily. Impossible!

Sir F. I have not ordered the chaise, till ten o'clock.

Emily. Oh dear! What, two whole hours longer!

Sir F. They are two ages, I grant—[*looking round*].
 Forgive my fears, my dearest Emily; but tho' the
 F 2 pleasure

pleasure of your company is the most precious thing on earth—a—a—yet—

Emily. What, you want me gone?

Sir F. Rather, than you should think so unkindly, I will run the hazard of being surprised, and eternally separated from you.

Emily. Will you! I am sure you don't love me then—However, I'll go.—You will be sure to be ready, the moment the clock strikes ten.

SCENE XVII. *SIR FREDERICK, Mrs. MODELY.*

Sir F. Time is precious—Here have been such plots, against me!

Mrs. Mod. Plots!

Sir F. Oh! I have escaped Scylla and Charybdis! But wind and tide are, now, both with me—Lady Morden is to meet me, here, in half an hour. Tho' that door is her chamber.

Mrs. Mod. Oh, you vile creature!

Sir F. What prude, to-morrow, will dare pretend that woman, and education, are a match for man, and nature?

Mrs. Mod. And so you will persist in your wickedness, in spite of my persuasions!

Sir F. Lady Morden has, still, all the rhodomontade of love, in her brain—Thinks of nothing but cooing-constancy, and eternal raptures!

Mrs. Mod. Simple woman!

Sir F. Except, indeed, tormenting her husband; which seems to give the sin a double sweetness.

Mrs. Mod. Or she would be no wife!

Sir F. So, as soon as I am gone off with Emily, I will have a consolatory epistle delivered to her.

Mrs. Mod. Compassionate road!

Sir F. Here it is, ready written; and, if I don't flatter myself, a master-piece.

Mrs. Mod. Let me see! Let me see!

Sir F. No, you shall hear. [*reads*] 'Dear Madam, 'Tho' you are an angel, if there are other angels, am 'I to blame?

Mrs.

Mrs. Mod. Certainly not.

Sir F. [reads] ' If man is naturally inconstant, and
' if I am a man—am I to blame ?

Mrs. Mod. Certainly not.

Sir F. [reads] ' If nature has made variety the
' highest enjoyment—am I to blame ?

Mrs. Mod. Certainly not.

Sir F. [reads] ' If, since happiness is the pursuit of
' us all, I am happy as often as I can—am I to blame ?

Mrs. Mod. Certainly not.

Sir F. [reads] ' Farewel, Madam ; circumstances,
' as you will find, force me, thus suddenly, from your
' arms, in which, I own, I found heaven centered :
' but, if you should call me cruel, perjured, and un-
' grateful, because I act naturally, and therefore ra-
' tionally—am I to blame ?

Mrs. Mod. Certainly not!—Well, as I live, this is
a master-stroke ! Perfectly as I thought I knew you,
you have astonished me !

Sir F. Yes ; 'tis the true Socratic mode—But, now,
my dear Mrs. Modely, go you to Emily, prevent her
disturbing us, and keep her in readiness.

Mrs. Mod. Well I remember, every thing is at
stake, and be yourself.

Sir F. Fear me not ; that prescience, which, they
say, is the forerunner of all great events, gives me a
happy assurance of success : a confidence, that makes
success certain.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

A C T V.

S C E N E I.

General Burland.

I Cannot keep from this house!—There is a foreboding of mischief, which haunts, and perturbs, my imagination!—And, I fear, with reason!—The malignant joy, the smothered exult, the obscure, ironical, satire, which ran through the discourse of that Sir Frederick, were not without a meaning.—I wish I had not consented to let Emily stay—He sneered, I remember, at the moment: nay, it seemed the sneer of triumph! I wish she were safe, at my own house.—Poor Lady Morden!—And, is it possible?—Such rectitude of heart!—Such purity of sentiment!—I wish Emily were at home—Should my child, my darling fall, I were a wretch indeed!

S C E N E II. GENERAL, LORD MORDEN.

Lord M. [wildly] I am miserable! distracted! racked!—The thunderbolt has struck before I heard it!—Oh that its exterminating power had been final! But it has maimed, and deformed, and left a full feeling of wretchedness!

Gen. How now, my Lord?

Lord M. General! I am a wretch!—An irretrievable, eternal, wretch!

Gen. What, and are you come to a sense of this, now it is too late?

Lord M. There's the misery!—The curse is accomplished, and hope is fled!

Gen. Why, ay! Such is the infatuation of folly, and vice, they will not believe vengeance has an arm, till its fatal gripe is felt!

Lord

Lord M. I cannot support these tortures!—Oh that it were possible!—

Gen. What?

Lord M. To reclaim Lady Morden.

Gen. What then? Another month and Sir Frederick Fashion, or any other libertine of fashion, might take her.

Lord M. Never!—Never!—Were her affections once again mine, the stroke of death, only should separate us!

Gen. [*with deep compassion*] Well, my Lord, if you are, at last, convinced of the immensity of your loss—I pity you!

Lord M. Oh, would you could relieve!

Gen. Would I could!—But, you were a witness how ineffectual my endeavours were. However, walk with me, into the antichamber, and let us consult what is best to be done.—Her principles, I fear, are shaken; the only rock on which virtue can stand secure.

Lord M. Sapped, destroyed!—She avows her intents! Unblushingly avows them! And, recapitulating my errors, my crimes, dares me to complain of, or notice, hers! Scorns and contemns me, and justly too, that such a thing as I should pretend to repeat, or respect, the word virtue!

Gen. It is what every husband, every father of a family, must expect! His smallest foibles will stand as precedents for a swarm of follies; and, if he has any vices, they will propagate a hideous brood, that shall extirpate his name from the earth, or overwhelm it with obloquy!

SCENE III. GABRIEL, SIR FREDERICK.

Gab. [*peeping after Lord Morden, and the General*] Come, mun!—Your worship, come!

Sir F. Are they gone?

Gab. Ees.

Sir F. Well, what hast thou done?—Where is Harriet?

Gab. Oh, I ha' her safe.

Sir

58 S E D U C T I O N :

Sir F. Thou !

Gab. Ees, mun—For, when the Bailiffs found out a wur a woman, they wur partly ravenous !

Sir F. And let her go ?

Gab. Ees.

Sir F. S'death !

Gab. But, I secured her.

Sir F. Secured ! Impossible ! How ?

Gab. Nay, never do you mind how—I tell'ee, I ha' her safe.

Sir F. But where are the Bailiffs ?

Gab. In this house.

Sir F. The devil they are !

Gab. Ees, they be—waiting for your worship.

Sir F. Death and Destruction !

Gab. But what o'that ? I a'got the contract, mun.

Sir F. Hast thou ?

Gab. Ees, here it is.

Sir F. Precious fellow ! I could worship thee !—Give it me.

Gab. [*putting his hand behind him*] Nay, hold there !—I wunna do that.

Sir F. Won't !

Gab. No—I wunna.

Sir F. Pshaw ! Make no words, but deliver it—and, here—here is—

Gab. Nay, put up your paper, for I wunna part wi' mine.

Sir F. S'death, fellow !

Gab. Nay, be mild tempered—stand where you be ; for an you stir another step, I'll call the Bailiffs.

Sir F. [*aside*] Cunning scoundrel !—He has me in his power, and time presses.—Well, Gabriel, be faithful, and, depend on't, I'll make thee a clever fellow.

Gab. Why, ecod, I think I am like a Monmouth-street coat—ready made.

Sir F. Thou remembereft the instructions I gave thee ?

Gab. Partly.

Sir

Sir F. The chaise is to wait at the corner of the street.

Gab. Ees.

Sir F. Thou art to convey Emily's handbox away, privately; and, if any questions are asked, to say it is Lady Morden's.

Gab. Ees.

Sir F. Hast thou taken care of the letter, I gave thee?

Gab. Care! Ees, ees; I a' ta'en good care on't.

Sir F. Observe, thou art to deliver it to Lady Morden, half an hour after we are departed.

Gab. Half an hour before you are departed.

Sir F. Zounds! No, half an hour after, man.

Gab. Oh! Ees, ees; half an hour after.

Sir F. Now begone.

Gab. But—but, how will your worship get by the Bailiffs?

Sir F. S'death, that's true!—Is there no disguise?

Gab. Why—ees—there be a long great-coat i'th' hall.

Sir F. Ay, true!—Bring it me.

Gab. Nay, nay—I'll put it on first, and let 'em see me—so, then, when they see you, they'll think it be I—

Sir F. Excellent! Where are Lord Morden, and the General?

Gab. I'th' t'other chamber.

Sir F. Unlucky! I wish they were any where else.

Gab. Oh!—an that be all, I'll soon make 'em budge.

Sir F. How?

Gab. Nay!—Lord, you're so quixotic!—I tell you, I'll do't—I'll saunter thro' this door, lock it, and send 'em packing thro' t'other.

Sir F. Thou art the prince of plotters—Away, be vigilant.

Gab. Oh! never do you fear me!

[Goes into the Antichamber.]

SCENE

SCENE IV. SIR FREDERICK, LADY MORDEN.

Sir F. This fellow would outwit a whole conclave of Cardinals !

Lady M. Well, Sir Frederick ! here I am, you see ; punctual to my promise.

Sir F. [*with vast insinuation, seeming sincerity, and humble rapture, all through the scene.*] Oh, Madam, how can I repay this bounty !—this condescension !—Never !—My life were a poor sacrifice, to such sweetness and such charms !

Lady M. Sir Frederick, this is a trying, a decisive moment ! I am going to be either the most happy or the most wretched of women ! You tell me, it is your wish, your resolution, to be no longer that general lover, that man of the world, you have hitherto, been thought.

Sir F. Say not, dear Lady, it is either my wish or resolution ! Heaven can testify, I have not the power to be any thing, but what it shall please you to make me !

Lady M. I have owned to you, that the levity I have lately affected is not natural to me ; that my heart sighs for an acquaintance, a mate, that, like itself, is subject to all the sweet emotions of sensibility !—Yes, it was the first wish of my soul to find this correspondent heart ! A heart beating with the same ardour, vibrating to the same sensations, panting for the same pleasures, shrinking from the same pangs ; pliant, yet firm ; gentle, yet aspiring ; passionate, yet pure !—Such I once thought Lord Morden's—Should I, a second time, be deceived !

Sir F. I am poor in proofs of sincerity ! I have none to offer !—My former errors are present punishments ! To deny or even palliate them would imply intentional deceit ; and this is a moment in which I would wish for men and gods to be witnesses of my truth !—I have had, I own, most libertine opinions of your gentle sex ; but these I, now, solemnly renounce !—Had I, before, met with a Lady Morden, I should, before, have

have made this renunciation!—But, perhaps, the women it has been my misfortune to know, deserved, in part, the light esteem in which I held them.—Never, till now, did I find one who could mutually inspire such passion and respect! Such agitated, burning, hopes! Such excruciating fears, or thoughts so sanctified, as those I, this moment, feel!

Lady M. Yet, Sir Frederick, I cannot help observing your conversation, in society, seems still tinged with the impurity of your former libertine principles.

Sir F. I own, Lady Morden, with confusion own, I have not hitherto had the courage, or, perhaps, I have wanted strength to stem the torrent: but, aided by you, I dare promise any thing!

Lady M. I confess, Sir Frederick, the mind finds some difficulty in rooting out fears, planted in it by reiterated accusations. The stories the world tells of you are dreadful! And, yet, there is such heart-felt conviction attends your present words that, to me, it is impossible to listen and retain a doubt.

Sir F. This generous confidence transports me, fills me with gratitude, and inspires rapturous hope! [*clutches her round the waist*] Oh, gently suffer me to conduct you, where love lies, in panting, breathless, ecstasy—

S C E N E V.

To them GABRIEL, abruptly, in a Great-coat, stands fixed, staring.

Sir F. [*sternly*] How now!

Gab. [*deliberately*] Belike—You dunna want company?

Sir F. No, Sir.

Gab. I thought as much——

Sir F. [*laying hold of him*] Begone, instantly!

Gab. Nay! Hands off! [*throws him from him*] I shan't stir, till I have delivered my message.

Sir F. What message? What have you to say?

Gab. [*aloud*] Why the chaise and four be come.

Sir F. How?

Gab.

Gab. [*Still louder*] The bandbox ready.

Sir F. Infernal booby!

Gab. Miss Emily waiting.

Sir F. [*violently*] Begone, I say.

Gab. Gone!—Nay, tartinely, you would no' ha' I run away wi' her.

Lady M. [*with contempt*] Ha, ha, ha!

Sir F. Lady Morden!

Lady M. Ha, ha, ha!—Why, surely, you! The never failing victor! The fertile-brained Sir Frederick Fashion! who knows not defeat, and who never, yet, was at a loss for stratagems! Though you are taken somewhat unawares, you cannot want invention!

Sir F. You'll pardon me, Madam, if I want understanding to comprehend your meaning.

Lady M. Indeed!—Well, if you are so very dull of apprehension—*am I to blame?*

Sir F. Madam!

Lady M. Oh!—Do you recollect—this letter?

Sir F. How!—Faithless fiend! [*goes to assault Gabriel, who throws back his great-coat and appears dressed as a gentleman.*]

Gab. Keep off, or dread the chastisement I am prompted, instantaneously, to inflict!

Sir F. Chastisement!—What is this?—Who are you?

Gab. A man!—You are—

Lady M. For heaven's sake, brother!—

Sir F. Brother!

Gab. Gabriel Wilmot; whose head is so full of the nonsense of friendship, honour, and honesty!

Sir F. I'll be revenged, however.

[*attacks Mr. Wilmot again.*]

SCENE VI.

To them LORD MORDEN, and GENERAL.

Lord M. Turn, wretch, and receive your punishment from this arm! [*Sir Frederick turns on Lord Morden.*]

Gen.

Gen. [*beating down their swords*] Oh, for shame!
—Look to the Lady—

Lady M. Oh, General!—Oh, my Lord! [*runs to Lord Morden and falls on his neck.*]

Lord M. My life! My ecstasy! My saviour!

SCENE VII.

To *them* Mrs. MODELY and EMILY.

Mrs. Mod. Bless me, what uproar—Hey day!—
[*aside*] So, so! Here is a very pretty denouement to our plot, indeed!—[*aloud*] I see, good folks, you are all embroiled here; and, as it is a very disagreeable thing to be present at family disputes, I'll—*is going; the General plants himself against the door*

Gen. Pray, Madam, stay, and receive the compliments of the company—Mine, and your friend Emily's, in particular.

Mrs. Mod. Oh, with pleasure!

Lord M. Mr. Wilmot! My best brother!—Though you have, in part, acquainted me with what is past, yet, it is so sudden—And you my dearest Lady! To find you still the same is joy unspeakable!

Lady M. The talk of making you suppose I had effectually become what I seemed, was, indeed, most painful; but the loss of your affection were not pain! 'Twere horror! I told you my passion was too permanent to be shaken—Ah! how could you imagine I meant another? Or think it possible I ever could forget that chaste, that ardent, that eternal, love, I have so repeatedly vowed?

Lord M. Oh for words!—I am all love! gratitude! rapture! and amazement!

Gen. And so is Sir Frederick, apparently—Nay, even you, Madam, seem a little surprised.

Mrs. Mod. Me! Oh dear, no.

Lady M. [*to Sir Frederick*] Dear Sir, though you are a deep and excellent plotter, if there have been counterplots—am I to blame? [*curtsies.*]

Mrs. Mod. [*with affected candour*] Certainly not.

Lady M. If man is sometimes vain, presumptuous, and unprincipled, and if you are a man—am I to blame?

Mrs. Mod. Certainly not.

Mr. Wilmot. If I assumed a mean disguise, that I might aid a sister, to detect, and expose, the mean machinations of Seduction—am I to blame?

Mrs. Mod. Certainly not.

Emily. If, following the advice of this dear Lady [to Lady Morden] simplicity has made cunning outwit itself—am I to blame? [*curtsying first to Sir Frederick, and then to Mrs. Modely.*]

Gen. [*with vast pleasure*] Certainly not.

Lady M. If, since happiness is the pursuit of us all, I wish to be as happy as possible—[*most affectionately taking hold of Lord Morden's hand*] am I to blame?

Omnes. Certainly not.

Sir F. [*with affected ease*] Certainly not—So, the catechism being ended, the scholars may depart.

Mr. Wilmot. Certainly not.

Sir F. Sir!

Mr. Wilmot. You forget the bailiffs.

Lady M. Besides, Sir Frederick, before you go, you must give me leave to introduce you to—

SCENE THE LAST.

To them *HARRIET* in woman's clothes presented by
Lady Morden.

—This Lady.

Sir F. Harriet!

Har. Yes, Sir—that Harriet, whom, hearing she had happiness in view, and proportioning your ideal triumph to the weight of misery you might entail, you raised heaven and earth to bring to wretchedness, and ruin.

Mrs. Mod. Upon my honour, you—you are a sad man, Sir Frederick!—A very sad man!

[*The company by their looks shew they understand Mrs. Modely's real character.*]

Har.

Har. But your vanity is humbled—you, now, stand detected; and, instead of envied, you will be sneered at by the depraved, pitied by the good, and, henceforth, avoided by the credulous young creatures you, so manfully, have delighted to involve in guilt, and destruction!

Mrs. Mod. A very dangerous man, indeed, Sir Frederick!

Gen. [ironically] Ay! beware of him, Madam.

Mrs. Mod. Oh! I—I will!

Har. Yes, Sir, the finger of scorn points where it ought: you are exposed, and my resentment is appeased.

Sir F. Then, Madam—the—the contract—

Har. There it is, Sir. [returns it] I never meant to make any other use of it than what has been better effected, by different means. [curtysing to Lady Morden and Mr. Wilmot.]

Sir F. Madam!—

Har. No thanks, Sir.

Gen. No; they would sit a little awkwardly.

Lady M. And now, Sir Frederick, if, after this lesson, you should still retain your former principles and practices, and, hereafter, receive a still severer punishment, I hope you will acknowledge—we are not to blame.

Exeunt Omnes.

EPILOGUE

Spoken by Miss FARREN.

IN former times—'tis long ago, I own—
Man, seated on the haughty husband's throne,
The wife by such absurd restraints enclos'd,
Not one gallant had she—as he suppos'd :
But, modest, meek, his jealous doubts appeas'd,
And sooth'd her lord and master—when she pleas'd.
Then, women led such exemplary lives,
Daughters, almost, as humble were—a—as wives !
“ A savage Salick law the men maintained ;
“ O monstrous ! We were slaves ! and husbands
“ reign'd.”—

Strange were these customs, obsolete ; but we
Consolidate our customs—and, you see,
Such wise designs no opposition find :
A fair-free trade is good for all mankind.
The lib'ral spirit of our lib'ral beauties
Has quite annull'd prohibitory duties.
The *Cicisbeo*, and the *chere amie*,
On the broad base of reciprocity,
Are exports now, and imports, duty free.

As for this Lady Morden's motley merit,
With her half-ancient, her half-modern spirit,
You'll imitate the part you most approve ;
Her modish licence, or her maukish love !

Of that no more—The subject of my speech,
The doctrine I came, purposely, to teach,

(Nay,

E P I L O G U E.

(Nay, look not low'ring, man of mighty sense)
Is rival woman's super-eminence—*

- " Yes, we have proofs where wit, where taste
" combin'd
" To deck, with blended charms, the female mind.
" Say, shall not we, with conscious pride, pro-
" claim
" A female critic rais'd—ev'n Shakespear's Fame !
" Yes, lordly man—look surly if you please,
" But women beat you out and out, with ease !
" In tales of fancy, tenderness, distress,
" If you dare doubt us—study *The Recept.*
" And oft let soft *Cecilia* win your praise ;
" While Reason guides the clue, in Fancy's maze.
" In tragedy our triumph all attest ;
" Your tears the genuine proof who acts the best—
" In comedy—But hold—I dread to say
" How much, of late, ev'n there, you've lost the
" day."

No, I'll not humble your proud sex so far,
Till you no more remember—SUCH THINGS ARE.

Gladly our author owns, all this is true ;
Nor thinks he's robb'd, when others have their due :
Yet, owning, hopes you've kindly heard his cause ;
Hopes to participate your just applause.
And, should your hands some grateful wreath com-
bine,

And should that wreath his anxious brow entwine,
The prize most precious mem'ry holds in store,
It there shall bloom—'till mem'ry is no more !

E P I L O G U E

* The verses, between inverted commas, were requested from, and written by, a gentleman whose literary abilities are great, and well known; and the following were, consequently, omitted.

Is rival woman's super-eminence
In wit, as well as beauty! Proofs I could
But will not cite, to make th' assertion good.
*Why should I speak, what's known to Fame and you,
Young André's woes; the wrongs of old Peru?
Why the Belle's Stratagem, or Percy name;
Or sweet Cecilia's never ending fame?
Our comic, or our tragic, triumphs quote;
Or tell how Siddons acted, Burney wrote?
No, I'll not humble, &c.*

F I N I S.



